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THESIS

**ITALIAN FOREIGN POLICY:
TRENDS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

by

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TRENDS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Second World War, foreign policy goals have rarely become the lead issue for any Italian administration, and the desire to maintain the “special relationship” between the United States and Italy has generally muted any dispute. The collapse of the Soviet Union and a growing concept of national interest in Italy have combined to change the basis of Italian-American cooperation. With increasing speed and fervor, Italian society and its political leadership continue to develop goals and ideas that are less dependant on foreign influence or reaction than has been the case in the past. The events of the 1990s made many Italians reflect on what their values and principles were. Italians feel increasingly able to voice their opinion, even when it differs with that of the United States. While as partners there is still an inequality of means, the developing independent agenda in Italy will reduce American influence to be an equally competing perspective in the national policy debate. Although it is uncertain how far future foreign policy aims will diverge from American interests, the trend certainly shows that Italians will feel less restraint in voicing their disagreements when they arise.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	ITALY’S POLITICAL LEGACY	5
A.	The Past as Prologue	5
B.	From Humble Origins – Consequences of State Formation	5
C.	Local and National Polarity	6
D.	Weak Central Government	7
E.	Economic Disparities and the North – South Split	10
F.	The Development of the Political System	12
G.	The Legacy of <i>Trasformismo</i>	13
H.	The Birth of the Republic	18
I.	The Post-War Political Order.....	20
III.	ITALY’S POSITION IN THE NATO ALLIANCE.....	23
A.	“Sailing Alone” in the Alliance?.....	23
B.	The legacy of the PCI in collective security	24
C.	The Bosnia Contact Group.....	27
D.	NATO Command Controversy	28
E.	Reaching out to Russia.....	30
F.	Operation ALBA.....	31
G.	The Enlargement Debate.....	33
H.	The Kosovo Crisis.....	35
I.	Domestic Political Turmoil.....	37
J.	Silent Commitment.....	37
IV.	ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES: AN ASSERTION OF IDENTITY	39
A.	A Legacy of Fealty.....	39
B.	The Erosion of American Dependence	40
C.	The Cold War <i>Status Quo</i>	42
D.	The significance of Sigonella.....	42
E.	The end of Cold War paradigms	47
F.	A New Echelon Emerges	48
G.	The Cermis Air Disaster	50
H.	The New Strategic Environment.....	52
V.	THE FUTURE OF THE “COMFORTABLE ALLIANCE”	55
A.	Toward a New Paradigm	55
B.	The Consequences of Change.....	56
C.	Sources of Continuity	58
D.	The Hidden Patterns in Dependency.....	60
E.	The Character of Future Cooperation	62
VI.	CONCLUSION.....	67

BIBLIOGRAPHY	71
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	77

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I. INTRODUCTION

Italy is a nation of considerable military capability and economic power that often has appeared to be “punching under its weight” in the international arena. Currently the world’s seventh largest economy, and the fifth largest contributor to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Italy has nonetheless historically avoided policy leadership, and remained to content to follow the American lead. Until recently, moreover, it has done so with little or no serious public debate. Prior to the end of the Cold War, and for some time afterwards, security issues rarely played a significant part in Italy’s otherwise vigorously contentious public life. In the post- September 11th era, with the advent of a “New Europe” in 2001-2003, this quiescence is now beginning to change, and Italy’s traditional “special relationship” with the United States is likely to change along with it.

Italian perceptions of security interests have changed significantly, and dramatic changes from old paradigms have taken place. In the Kosovo conflict of 1999, former Prime Minister Massimo D’Alema, a Communist whose party once advocated Italy’s exit from NATO, endorsed a NATO bombing campaign and provided troops to enter the embattled Serbian province without a United Nations Mandate. Less than four years later in January 2003, conservative Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi endorsed a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that made a public announcement of Italian support for American policy in Iraq, but found himself politically unable to dispatch troops to enforce a preexisting UN Resolution. In both crises, public opinion has directed the decisions of the nation’s leadership to a degree previously unseen in a habitually insular political world of Italian foreign policy development. The dynamics of this interaction, the manner in which it has changed, and how it will determine Italy’s future security policy decisions are the subjects of this thesis

This thesis examines the evolution of Italian foreign policy decision-making, with particular emphasis on changes that have emerged since the electoral reforms of 1992. Prior to the 1992 election --which has been popularly referred to as the birth of a “Second Republic”-- Italian politics were dominated by the hegemonic influence of their Christian

Democratic Party. The first chapter, below, considers the implications and legacy of its long rule, and argues that Italy's decisions to join the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union were an outgrowth of internal conditions and an governing consensus that had remained constant since its unification. Throughout this long period, Italian foreign policy was a prime arena for what the Italians call *trasformismo*, a centralizing and conciliatory practice by which Italian coalition governments have long sought to maintain their power, but one that necessarily limits the scope and impact of public scrutiny.

Chapter II discusses Italian foreign policy in a multilateral environment, above all its role within NATO. Both internal and external factors have combined to reduce Italy's ability to offer policy vision or direction to the organization. As a result, despite increased challenges to Italy's security and a growing public awareness of the significance of foreign relations, Italy has allowed itself to become marginalized within the Atlantic alliance, despite the rising significance of Mediterranean security issues for Europe. This chapter also considers how new security challenges have increased public interest in foreign policy.

Chapter III examines Italian foreign policy in the bilateral context of its relations with the United States. It begins with a review of American efforts to reshape the world view of post-Fascist Italy after the Second World War, and traces how some of these views have diverged once the United States appeared to lose interest. Significant attention will be paid to the 1985 *Achille Lauro* hijacking, an episode that can serve as a kind of barometer of Italian-American relations. This chapter also considers how changes in the political climate changed the tone of Italian-American relations during the 1990s.

Chapter IV gathers the strings of these histories for a reflection on how the Italian perception of interests has diverged from traditional norms. Based on the changes in the political system and the necessity to respond to international crises, spanning from Bosnia to Iraq, Italians have become substantially more interested, and more polarized, on the issue of American cooperation than at any other time since the end of the Second

World War. The thesis concludes by considering the likely future of Italian-American security cooperation under these new political conditions.

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II. ITALY'S POLITICAL LEGACY

A. THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

The development of foreign policy is one of the most complex functions of modern government. It requires a state to present a unitary “face” to the other actors in the international arena, based upon a common vision of national interest. The clarity and cohesion of that vision will in turn reflect the interactions of the governing elite among themselves, as well as with the broader public to which they are responsible. In the final analysis, foreign policy is an expression of the general social will as interpreted by the political leadership.

This chapter will outline how the foreign policy process has developed in Italy, for it is only with an appreciation of history that the present challenges and potentialities facing Italian foreign politics are clear. Politicians, while guided individually by personal experience, are also members of political parties that share common expectations. These parties are the inheritors of ideologies that are shaped by history. Understanding the development of tensions within Italian society that have shaped the state and the manner in which their politicians interact serves as a crucial underpinning to explaining government behavior in subsequent chapters.

B. FROM HUMBLE ORIGINS – CONSEQUENCES OF STATE FORMATION

When compared to its Western European partners, the history of the Italian state is rather short. It is easy to think of Italy as a unified peninsula since the days of the Roman Empire, but it is historically false. Italians traditionally date their national unification “in the *annus mirabilis* of 1860”¹ when Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Piedmont and Sardinia, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, a passionate democrat and revolutionary leader marched their combined armies into Naples. Garibaldi had left Piedmont, in northwestern Italy, with his army, one thousand “Red Shirts,” to fight for the liberation of

¹ Denis Mack Smith, *Italy*, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1959), 3.

the Kingdom of Two Sicilies (modern Sicily and the territory around the city of Naples) from Bourbon rule. As Garibaldi's forces advanced northward, Vittorio Emanuele I had been convinced by his Prime Minister, Count Camillo de Cavour, to move his armies south through the Papal States and forestall the entry of The Thousand into Rome. When the two leaders met at Teano, south of Naples, in 1860, Garibaldi surrendered southern Italy to the Piedmontese King. With the primacy of leadership thus firmly established in favor of his king, "Cavour organized plebiscites in the areas occupied by his troops; the results were often falsified and involved only a minority of the population, but they gave a semblance of democratic justification under a liberal constitutional monarchy."² As a result of these plebiscites, the first organized meeting of representatives of most of the Italian territories was held in Turin on 18 February 1861. In front of the newly established Parliament, on 17 March 1861 Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Sardinia, was named Vittorio Emanuele I, "King of Italy, by the grace of God, and by the will of the People."³

C. LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLARITY

The circumstances of this political unification are relevant to the modern political system in several ways. Foremost, it serves as a reminder that for most of their history, Italians were united by commerce, language, and culture rather than by government. Until the 1861 Parliament, Italians had organized themselves into smaller, regional polities. The city-states of the Renaissance, with the Medici ruled Florence at the time of Machiavelli and Leonardo DaVinci being the best example, had a long tradition and gave way only to regional conglomerates based on commerce, such as the Republic of Venice or the Kingdom of Genoa in the sixteenth century. As a result, Italians have always had a strong sense of local or regional identity that has only more recently had a national construct to compete with. Even Cavour's first Parliament did not include all future Italians; Venice and its territories were only included after the Prussian defeat of Austria in 1866, Rome and the Papal territories upon their abandonment by the French in 1871,

² Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations, and Nationalism*, (Malden, MA, Blackwell, 2002), 216.

³ Liliana Saiu, *La politica estera italiana dall'Unità a oggi*, (Rome, Laterza, 1999), 3.

and the Adige and South Tyrol regions were added with the defeat of the Central Powers at the end of World War I.

Nor has the advance of a national government eroded local authority. In modern elections, the media coverage of city elections in key population centers carries equal importance with that of concurrent regional contests. An informal assessment of the national media coverage of the 2000 American and 2001 Italian national elections⁴ would place American gubernatorial races on par in popular significance with Italian large city elections, while the regional Italian elections appear less important than American gubernatorial races. Mayors of big cities are national political actors of considerably greater importance than their American counterparts; in 2001 the challenger of the current Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, was the center-left *L'Ulivo* party candidate Francesco Rutelli, the Mayor of Rome. By contrast, few sitting mayors could be imagined to make a direct bid for national office in the United States. While the readily apparent differences in size and population between the two countries obviously skew comparison, the relative lack of importance accorded Italian provincial and regional elections in the media is clear. Public interest remains strongly at the city and national levels.

D. WEAK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The manner in which Italian regional kingdoms were unified under the reign of Vittorio Emanuele II has had long lasting consequences for modern Italy. Often referred to as “Piedmontization,” Cavour believed that “a superior effort was needed to bring together, coordinate, and direct the nationalist sentiment that was scattered among disparate groups...[and] only liberal Piedmont could provide the leadership and controls.”⁵ Cavour used Piedmontese politicians to assume positions of authority in the newly aligned territories, and thereby homogenized and centralized the national political system to reflect his own tastes. Cavour went so far as to install his own Piedmontese

⁴ Based on the author's daily access to national media for both elections

⁵ ⁵ Ronald S. Cunsolo, *Italian Nationalism: From its Origins to World War II*, (Malabar, FL, Robert E. Kreiger, 1990), 68.

political rivals over local alternatives, and used the civil service to establish political authority and break regional power bases in the same manner Louis XIV had established his *intendents* in France. Historian Rene Albrecht-Carrie has noted that “the circumstances of Italian unification [in fact] gave Piedmont a disproportionate importance in the molding of a united Italy.”⁶

The imposition of a “foreign” system of administration was not always well received. Supporters of the democratic state envisioned by Garibaldi were among the most deeply disappointed, and began a period of “brigandage” and civil war in direct opposition to the new system of rule. Historical records show that “though a plebiscite claims to show 99 percent approval by the people of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for their annexation by Piedmont-Sardinia, half the army of the new Kingdom of Italy is needed to suppress rebellions there.”⁷ This period of violence lasted from 1861 to 1865, and claimed more lives than the struggles for independence against Austria, France, and Spain combined. The armed opposition formed largely because the Piedmontese administration saw little need to reform the existing power structure in rural southern Italy, preferring to maintain the status quo regarding state franchise and property rights. Piedmontese administration in the south often seemed colonial in character to those who lived there, having been designed to maximize the economic output for the overall good of the state, while extending only those rights and services necessary to either stem complete revolt or ensure continued compliance. As a result, “there was no agrarian reform in Italy – the broad mass of the Italian peasantry and rural proletariat remained indifferent to the issue of a national state, with consequences for Italy’s political culture that can still be observed today.”⁸

The modern inheritance of this ill will is a distrust, and sometimes blatant disobedience, of the national government as a system, regardless of the political group in charge. Some Italians distrust the motives of their national leadership, in the same way that some Americans like to heap scorn on those “inside the Beltway.” While apparent at

⁶ Rene Albrecht-Carrie, *Italy: From Napoleon to Mussolini*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1962), 47.

⁷ R. Valente, “Chronology of the Unification of Italy,” 13 May 2003 at <http://www.roangelo.net/valente/garibald.html>.

⁸ Shulze, 228.

the inception of the state, this phenomenon gained momentum in the early Twentieth Century, when the authoritarian government of the Fascists often repressed its citizens, and caused the populace to eventually view state authorities as enemies themselves. At the individual level, this shallow fidelity to the national government is currently manifest in both the acceptance of the “black” economy, where goods and labor are traded without the hindrance of generating taxes for the state, and the growing popularity of banking “offshore,” where the state cannot track earnings to assess income taxes. Both problems are significant challenges to state authority. The underground economy, “according to Istat, the national statistics institute...accounts for 15.4% of GDP (although the [International Monetary Fund] IMF, in its most recent estimate, puts it at 27% of GDP,”⁹ for the year 2001.

This distrust, furthermore, is not confined to the private grumbling of the common man. Politicians have embraced this sentiment to mobilize the voting public, the most recent example being the leader of the separatist movement the Northern League, Umberto Bossi. Patrick McCarthy, a European Studies professor at the Johns Hopkins Center in Bologna, notes that “when [Bossi] launched the movement in 1984, he tried to build a regional force that emphasized the dialect and culture of [the region of] Lombardy. He soon realized that love of Lombardy was less strong than dislike of Rome. He switched to language that was transgressive... [and] finds a mass audience when he excoriates the “Roman robbers” and talks of “decapitating the capital.”¹⁰ However intemperate his speech, Bossi’s platform earned him enough popular support to be included in Prime Minister Berlusconi’s *Casa delle Libertà* (House of Freedoms) ruling coalition. He currently serves in the newly created position of Minister of Devolution, a historically ironic title for an individual who comes from the area once believed to be imposing unification on the South.

⁹ *The Economist* Online (hereafter Economist.com), “Economic Structure” in *Country Briefings:Italy*, July 22, 2002, (9 April, 2003 at http://www.economist.com/countries/Italy/Story_ID=1245401).

¹⁰ Patrick McCarthy, “Italy,” in Tiersky, Ronald, ed., *Europe Today: National Politics, European Integration, and European Security*, (Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 151.

E. ECONOMIC DISPARITIES AND THE NORTH – SOUTH SPLIT

The newly unified state of Italy was a merger of regions of vastly different economic development. In many respects “the popular phrase ‘the two Italies’ may be misleading in that it exaggerates the differences –economic, psychological, and cultural – between the North and South. However, it is undeniable that those differences are real and significant for the understanding of Italian politics.”¹¹ By the period of unification, the northern principalities had profited greatly from decades of direct control by either Napoleonic administration or the Hapsburg monarchy. They developed an economy of small sharecropping farms (*mezzadria*) and industry that gave birth to an educated and liberal bourgeoisie. The southern Kingdom of the Two Sicilies fell prey, however, to the exploitation of absentee foreign aristocrats who organized the economy on large, plantation style farms (*latifondo*) where few urban commercial centers developed. The result was a nation divided from the start both economically and culturally, even as it attempted to meet the social challenges of industrialization.

Italy did not really profit from industrialization until the 1950s, when it reaped the benefits of the post-war “Economic Miracle.” But industrialization has done little to close the gap established with unification. Writing almost two decades after the “Economic Miracle,” the historians Dante Germino and Stefano Passigli noted that “during the past one hundred years the South has declined economically in comparison with the North, and today [in 1968,] it is relatively poorer than it was in 1861. To put it more precisely, in 1861 the gross product of the southern regions was closer to that of the northern regions than it is today.”¹² Even in the twenty-first century, despite decades of government sponsored development programs to address the imbalance, there is a split between the industrialized northern regions and the predominantly agricultural zones of the south.

The economic disparity in Italy affects its security interests in several ways. The first is trade. The South has maintained a rural character, centered on agricultural

¹¹ Dante Germino and Stefano Passigli, *The Government and Politics of Contemporary Italy*, (New York, Harper and Row, 1968), 1.

¹² Germino, 23.

production and supporting the only regions of excess population in Italy. Trade issues therefore take a high priority, as Italy must maintain interstate commercial relations and open markets in order to export the agricultural products of the south.¹³ In an increasingly globalized economy, basic level inputs like foodstuffs and labor are easily substituted commodities. Capital is easily attracted to where labor can be found cheaply, leaving the work force of the southern economy particularly vulnerable to the whims of investors. At the national level the problem is significant, for despite the fact that “much of its mountainous terrain is unsuitable for farming, Italy has a large work force (1.4 million) employed in farming”:¹⁴ fully 2.4% of the entire population, but over 7% of the male population aged 15-64.¹⁵

Unemployment remains high in the South, estimated at 20% in 2002.¹⁶ This surplus of labor also hints at the second security dilemma, immigration. Circumstances of development and geography have paired poorly for Italy in this regard, as the poorest regions of Italy are the closest to the most common sources of illegal immigrants; the southern Balkans and North Africa. Jutting out into the sea lanes of the Mediterranean, the southern provinces of Basilicata, Calabria, and Puglia often serve as the doormat for African, Asian and Middle Eastern refugees looking to find a better life in the nations of Europe. The Italian government incurs significant expenses in both policing the maritime borders and in running small cities of incarcerated immigrants awaiting repatriation. As a result, illegal immigrants present a social services burden to the regions that can least afford it.

While the influx of immigrants has provided the cheap labor necessary for the agrarian economy, illegal immigration increases the number of unemployed workers in the economy. In the interconnected realm of the European Union, where the unemployment level has hovered around ten percent for the last decade, the burden of

¹³ While Italy is a net food importer, most of its agricultural export goods originate in the South. “The northern part of Italy produces primarily grains, sugarbeets, soybeans, meat, and dairy products, while the south specializes in producing fruits, vegetables, olive oil, wine, and durum wheat [the basis for pasta].” Source: US Department of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, “Background Note: Italy,” November 2002, (29 April, 2003 at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4033.htm>).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ US Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 2002, “Italy” (May 10, 2003 at <http://www.cia.gov/publications/factbook/print/it.html>).

¹⁶ Ibid.

illegal immigrants is officially unwelcome. As a result, Italian national authorities are placed under significant pressure from Brussels, as well as the regions, to respond to the problem. These combined pressures often conspire to weaken the national government's policy-making ability exponentially. Alison Pargeter, of the King's College Centre for Defence Studies, recounts how the Italian government presented an informal plan to the European Council in 1999 "which proposed burden-sharing in the cost of controlling its borders and official recognition of its role as a state on the frontier of Europe."¹⁷

The proposal were denied, and the Italian government instead "has been accused informally by north European officials of playing on the problem of illegal immigration in order to secure financial support from the rest of the EU,"¹⁸ for the benefit of Italy's own southern regions.

F. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

It is difficult to ascertain why the economic and social disparity between the North and South persists today. That such an internal schism can survive, despite the radical social upheaval of industrialization, two World Wars (fought in part on Italian soil), and the social reengineering that followed in each post-war period, is at least somewhat surprising. Popular discontent with lawmakers in Rome is not enough to explain why social reform has not put the country on a more uniform footing. The modern Republic has survived because no matter how vitriolic the rhetoric, political challengers from the left like the Red Brigades in the 1970s, or from the right like the Northern League in the 1980s, have never managed to stir up enough broad-based support to reach their goal of dissolving the system. Tax evasion may be an accepted in parts of the culture, but it is any case an adaptive strategy, rather than one designed to transform the status quo. Active disobedience of the national government is no more tolerated in Italy than in any other well-established democracy.

¹⁷ Alison Pargeter, "Italy and the Western Mediterranean," (Brighton, UK, Sussex European Institute, 2001), 17, (10 September 2002 at www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/w26pargeter.pdf).

¹⁸ Ibid.

Since unification, Italy has been plagued by decisions about how their government was organized that has hampered its efficiency. Apart from the most obvious consequence of Italy's infamous revolving door coalition governments, the manner in which those in power interact with each other has traditionally limited their willingness, and perhaps their ability, to define the "national interest" in categorical terms. Developments and reform in the past decade nevertheless have the potential to crystallize political sentiments and clarify debate at the national level in a manner previously unseen. In order to appreciate the degree of transformation since the end of the Cold War, however, it is first necessary to outline the developmental path of Italian politics to understand where the points of change really are and how they might fare in the future.

G. THE LEGACY OF *TRASFORMISMO*

The closest parallel for the development of the Italian nation, in European history, is the unification of Germany under the direction of the Prussian Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck.¹⁹ Count Cavour, the architect of Italian unification, is often regarded not only as Bismarck's contemporary, but his equal as a statesman. In yet another of history's ironies, however, Cavour was to die within months of having seen his monarch be crowned the "King of Italy." As a result, the newly unified lands lost one of the men most capable at translating this political fact into a social reality. Cavour's historical reputation has probably remained intact because of the timing of his departure from the temporal world whose problems were to prove so daunting to his successors. In any case, it is clear that his successors had a difficult time meshing the state and the nation together.

The new nation, a parliamentary monarchy, was left without a centralizing figure to determine what type of state it would become. Other key actors in the Risorgimento set forth various opinions, but the popular democracy initially envisioned by Garibaldi and The Thousand would never become a reality because of the way the government was initially organized. The mass plebiscites that Cavour had organized to give the veneer of

¹⁹ Cunsolo, 73.

legitimacy to the accord between Vittorio Emanuele II and Garibaldi did not become the standard for civil participation in government. Through a series of “Jim Crow” laws that required literacy or property rights to earn a franchise, the masses that had participated in the plebiscites were excluded from selecting the leaders of the nation they had built. As a result, “the governing elite was drawn from a distinctly limited segment of the population, and Parliament was, in the literal sense, more ‘representative’ of the small middle class than of the majority of the people.”²⁰ It is unsurprising that such a narrow electorate would have a homogenous view of national interest. Nor is it surprising that the politicians themselves realized just how tenuous a position they, and the new state, held with the society at large. The bloodshed of the “Second war of Unification,” the struggles against anti-government brigands from 1861 to 1865, would have certainly made this point clear to them. In fact the “savage repression that followed [Unification] killed more Italians than all the wars of the *Risorgimento* combined, intensifying suspicion and mistrust of the state.”²¹

As industrialization and government unification began to transform Italian society, the general populace sought greater inclusion in government. The small clique of bourgeois Parliamentarians responded accordingly, and shifted their political sympathies from the Right to the Left. In doing so, they established a style of governance that came to be known as *trasformismo*. A term originally coined in 1876 by Agostino Depretis, Prime Minister of the first leftist administration, *trasformismo* [roughly “transformism”] is a concept that defies literal translation. Depretis sought to smash the power of the right and gain support for liberal legislation by appealing to his fellows to “transform themselves” and overcome party labels and division. In practice, *trasformismo* represented “a politics of opportunism and unprincipled power seeking on the part of government determined to adopt whatever policy is necessary to remain at the helm.”²² The adoption of this mindset has had direct implications on the shape of party politics and the manner in which national interests are determined by the government.

²⁰ Germino, 4.

²¹ John Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the Renaissance to the Present*, (New York, W. W. Norton, 1996), 764.

²² Germino, 5.

Trasformismo served to moderate party conflict, and so contributed to the stability of the fledgling Italian state. But it also deprived Italian public life of the clarifying light that such conflict may sometimes shine on contentious issues.

The foremost impact of *trasformismo* was to drive an insular political class further together. The Depretis government did not usher in a left administration as much as it simply broke the administrative hegemony of the forces of the right. The politics of *trasformismo* meant that government positions were open to all; the sole requirement for entry in the ruling coalition was to be in the largest group that supported continuing Parliamentary rule. The political landscape therefore changed from a division of left and right to a large, vaguely homogenous center, flanked by small groups of radicals. The system was to be perfected under Giovanni Giolitti, who dominated Italian political life at the beginning of the twentieth century. Continuously in power from 1901 to 1914, he freely dissolved coalition governments whenever he felt his position threatened, and frequently included political adversaries in subordinate positions in order to co-opt them, thus maintaining his rule. As will be shown, his example provided a model for the post-World War II dynasty of the Christian Democrats.

The large, moderate center also pegged the position of the Communists and Socialists in the political spectrum for some time. Both hard line Marxists and the heirs of Mazzini's populist "Young Italy" movement were excluded from the reforming coalitions of like-minded bourgeois Liberal politicians. As they waited for the promise of Marx's classless society to materialize, the Communists, in particular, were split between a desire to overthrow the infant system or work with the majority bourgeois coalitions to enact reform and obtain short-term social goals. Because of the nature of the franchise that got them in to Parliament, they often were not represented in large enough numbers to successfully realize either goal. As a result, "the victory of *trasformismo* meant a decline in the vitality of the opposition with a resultant weakening of Parliament's role as critic and guardian against corruption."²³ The Communists, therefore, being "untransformable," have long functioned as a "gadfly" to the Italian body politic. Like Socrates loitering around the Athenian Senate, their presence could be tolerated and their

²³ Ibid.

criticism heard, but they would not be incorporated into the consensual “center” from which all governments were chosen. Because the elements of that center were concerned above all to preserve their eligibility for inclusion in a ruling coalition, they generally swam in the mainstream of political opinion. As a result, it was only on rare occasions that the center reached out to the politicians of the left.

Like Socrates, however, the continuous prodding from the left eventually provoked a reaction with tragic consequences. Recognizing that what strength in numbers it lacked must be replaced with strength in unity, “ever since 1892 the Italian Socialist Party had bound its parliamentary members to vote as directed to party leaders.”²⁴ Socialism became an increasingly formidable factor in the Italian Parliament as the franchise expanded, culminating in the outright adoption of universal male suffrage in 1912.²⁵ With an eye to the Russian Revolution, and a realization of the acceptance of violence in society as a result of the impact of the First World War, all of a sudden the possibility of a Communist revolution posed a threat to the moderate bourgeois political class. As a result, “close on the heels of [suffrage] reform, came, in 1919, the replacement of the single-member direct system [of elections]...by the system of proportional representation.”²⁶

In switching to a proportional representation system, Italy consciously abandoned the mechanics of democracy, at least as they exist in the United States. The price of this decision was made almost immediately evident. As Angelo Codevilla notes, “the inchoate Liberal majority in the Italian parliament, struggling to build governing coalitions against the disciplined bloc-voting Socialists, hoped that [proportional representation] would bring discipline to its own ranks. In a contest that hinged on discipline however, victory went to Benito Mussolini’s Fascists, an even more disciplined offshoot of the Socialist Party.”²⁷ Firmly establishing itself as a movement of the radical right, it is useful to recall that Mussolini came to power from a mandate secured from the

²⁴ Angelo Codevilla, “A Second Italian Republic?” in *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1992, Vol.71, No. 3, p 146.

²⁵ The Socialist support base grew incrementally as a result of both the economic opportunities of industrialization, which expanded the size of the petty bourgeois class, and the abolition, in 1882, of the property qualification to vote.

²⁶ Germino, 5.

²⁷ Codevilla, 146.

Italian King, Vittorio Emanuele III, to form a coalition government.²⁸ Mussolini rose to power from within the system, not as an outside agitator, and received his mandate from the highest authority in the state. It was not until 1925 that Mussolini announced his authoritarian, single-party regime. This move was a reaction to the possible collapse of his government by the Aventine Secession, a Parliamentary protest brought about by the Fascist assassination of the Unitary Socialist Party leader Giacomo Matteotti.²⁹ That Mussolini was able to consolidate power as a single leader, the *Duce*, is arguably yet another unintended consequence of *trasformismo*. In addition to the previously mentioned weak connection between the national political scene and local concerns, many of those that did take an interest in national politics had become frustrated with the apparent emergence of a professional political caste solely intent on maintaining their positions of power. The constant forming and reforming of coalitions not only disrupted development in other parts of society, but weakened the Parliament's ability to serve as a forum to debate national interest. In the Giolittian era prior to 1914, "the groupings in Parliament were functions based on a clientele relationship to key personalities rather than stable, organized parties."³⁰ It can be asserted that for many, Mussolini's consolidation of political power was simply a modification of the pre-World War I status quo. In this regard, the historian Gaetano Salvemini "has bluntly accused Giolitti of having been a precursor of fascism. Giolitti, he wrote, was Mussolini's 'John the Baptist'."³¹ However tightly the politics of *trasformismo* and fascism may be linked, the political legacy the two ideologies have left is undisputed. Italian politics has shifted between a nebulous multipolarity and unipolar fascist dictatorship, and therefore never developing the strong bi-polar structure that has tended to characterize other similarly

²⁸ Although this is largely remembered as a result of Mussolini's "March on Rome," Denis Mack Smith's authoritative biography, *Mussolini*, (London, Phoenix Press, 1981), recounts how most of the images of popular uprising against the existing government were staged after the fact. While there was considerable pressure on the King to empower Mussolini and his movement, it should be recognized as more political than popular in nature.

²⁹ This crisis, called the Aventine Secession, recalls an event in Roman politics when in 500 B.C. the people withdrew to the Aventine Hill of Rome in order to protest the patrician rulers. After the Matteotti assassination, roughly 100 center-left deputies, under the leadership of Giovanni Amendola, staged a walk out to protest against Mussolini and have the King remove him. Failing to obtain sympathy from either the King or the Vatican, Mussolini was able to deprive them of their seats in Parliament and outlaw the Socialist, Catholic (*Popolari*), Republican, and Democratic Liberal Parties.

³⁰ Germino, 5.

³¹ Germino, 6.

mature democracies. As a result, the Republic created after the Second World War has inherited a political tradition where ideological debate on national interest has simply been too diffuse to be effective, if not, indeed, nonexistent. The call and response pattern witnessed in legislatures with a party in power and a loyal opposition, particularly useful in distilling debate at the level of national interest, has been significantly absent in the Italian political tradition.

H. THE BIRTH OF THE REPUBLIC

After the *ventennio*, the “dual decade” of fascist rule, Italy’s foreign policy shaped its domestic political structure. In part due to Allied reconstruction, the politics of *trasformismo* reemerged in the new Italian Republic. This occurred largely as a result of the Italian state’s final choices at the end of the Second World War. Vittorio Emanuele III regained control of the Italian Army and dismissed Mussolini on 25 July 1943, but did not turn against the Germans and surrender to the Allied advance until September 3rd. This reticence to evict their former Nazi partners certainly colored the initial American and British administration of newly liberated territory. Foreign relations with Britain and the United States had to overcome an initial perception that Roman authorities were indecisive and untrustworthy. What did temper the Allied reaction to Italy was their conduct against the Germans over the next eighteen months. Denis Mack Smith estimates that “there had probably been a hundred thousand casualties among the regular and irregular Italian forces,”³² in support of the Allied effort against the German Army. Most of the irregular partisan forces, which played significant tactical roles in the final liberation of the North, were anti-fascist because they came from the political left.

The eighteen-month liberation struggle had several lasting consequences for the political organization of Italy. First, the liberal conservatives, who had participated in government under Giolitti or Mussolini, were reservedly accepted by Allied administrators by virtue of their practical experience of government. Leadership of the center right was eventually bestowed on Alcide De Gasperi, who, after founding the

³² Mack Smith, *Italy*, 492.

Christian Democratic Party (DC – *Democratichi Christiani*), became the first Premier under the new Constitution. De Gasperi had been elected to Parliament as part of the Catholic Italian Popular Party (PPI – *Partito Popolare d'Italia*) in 1921, but was imprisoned by Mussolini after the failed Aventine Secession in 1926. Upon his release from jail, De Gasperi avoided the fascist regime by taking up residence in the Vatican, and had been the secretary of the Vatican Library since 1939. While De Gasperi was a palpable choice for the Allies, the tacit support of the Vatican during the ventennio did not elicit a ringing endorsement for his constituency among the British and Americans.

Second, the active participation of the leftist partisans earned the Socialists and Communists a position at the post-war table. At the time of the Allied landings in Italy, the strategic planners at Whitehall and the Pentagon were only just beginning to consider the Soviet Union a potential threat in the post-war environment. What fears did exist were suppressed by Franklin Roosevelt in order to maintain the continued participation of “Uncle Joe” Stalin’s forces in the war. As anti-communism was not yet a driving force in Western foreign policy, partisans were then not automatically excluded because they were “Red,” but in fact appreciated for their direct cooperation against the Nazis. Palmiro Togliatti, founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI – *Partito Comunista Italiano*) in 1921, was allowed to return from exile in the Soviet Union. In a speech in Salerno in April 1944 that endeared him to the Allies, “Togliatti told the Italian communists that the priority was to defeat Nazism, not to attempt an Italian proletarian revolution.”³³ Nationalists in the post-war state were as different in character as the revolutionaries of 1848 that had paved the way for unification. As the struggle against the Hapsburgs and French had united citizens and subjects of several regional powers, the fight against the Nazis served as a convenient rallying point for Italian society and helped many overcome their own involvement with a totalitarian government. In this spirit of unification, the Communists were welcomed, and as Mack Smith has noted, “won a disproportionate influence in local government and the electoral machine.”³⁴ The

³³ McCarthy, 134.

³⁴ Mack Smith, 493.

immediate relevancy of their inclusion was their post-war realization that “to penetrate civil society and gain cultural hegemony, it had to be a mass party that would work by constitutional methods.”³⁵

I. THE POST-WAR POLITICAL ORDER

Angelo Codevilla notes that it was “the American and British governments, not the Italian people, [who] forced the king to accept the self-appointed leaders of the Christian Democratic, Socialist, Communist, and other parties as the authoritative representatives of the Italian people.”³⁶ As demonstrated by the choice of De Gasperi and Togliatti, however, the choice was obviously in favor of politicians with anti-fascist credentials and previous experience in government. In a lesson that has application for nation building efforts today, the choice to install experienced party leadership also meant that their political baggage was carried into the new era.

The interim legislature that drafted the Constitution of the Italian Republic was split almost evenly three ways between the Democrats, Socialists and Communists. Recognizing that no clear majority could exist without a coalition, the political leaders of Italy returned to the voting system of Proportional Representation that had existed before the *Duce* assumed full authority. Codevilla notes that “whatever else divided them the party leaders were unanimous in their determination to shut out competition.”³⁷ Party leadership, not a popular vote, had dictated who had earned a spot on the Constitutional convention, “hence self-appointed party leaders were able to pick both the assembly that drew up the constitution and the parliament that ratified it.”³⁸ The overall result was that it again created an insular political class, as “the members of parliament are little more than employees of the party leaders who make up those lists.”³⁹

As will be detailed in subsequent chapters, the United States and the Soviet Union did their best to influence the list makers in the Italian Republic. Italian domestic politics

³⁵ McCarthy, 135.

³⁶ Codevilla, 147.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

often served as a forum for larger superpower disputes because party leaders had distinct financial or ideological connections outside the state. Yet it was exactly because of these connections that foreign policy questions would rarely rise to national debate. Polarization over foreign policy issues became easy, because in meeting the requirement to distill national interest, and develop a unitary “face” for the international arena, opinions had to be clearly set. Since polarization is not conducive to coalition building, questions of foreign policy were best avoided. In 1945 De Gasperi became the first Christian Democrat Premier, and by May 1947 had expelled the Communists and their left-wing Socialist partners from his government. Largely because of American influence, the Christian Democrats won the first election in the new Republic in 1948. From a starting point of having his country occupied by American forces and the offer of Marshall Plan aid, De Gasperi initially attempted to adopt a neutralist foreign policy, but then quickly aligned his nation with the West. In charge of a country with longstanding socio-economic divisions, only exacerbated by what ended as a civil war, De Gasperi’s choice to solicit outside assistance, and accept the political strings attached to it is not surprising. The “Italian search for internal stability thus gravitated naturally toward the institutional regime being initiated by the United States to restructure global affairs after the termination of the war.”⁴⁰

De Gasperi would remain in charge of ruling coalitions until 1953, when he lost his post as Prime Minister after a failed attempt to draw the Socialists away from the Communists, and into a coalition with the DC. In 1953, the “Economic Miracle” had begun to change lifestyles enough that more than an insular, wealthy class took interest in government policy. A growing middle class allowed the Socialist voting base to expand to a substantial political force. The Socialists declined at the time to part with their Communist partners, and it would not be until 1983 that Benito Craxi would be selected as the first Socialist Prime Minister. Yet even Craxi was a member of a DC coalition, and as such depended on the Christian Democrats and the ties they had to American foreign policy programs. Coalition politics once more substantially limited the choices leaders could make in international affairs. The politics of *trasformismo* were carried

⁴⁰ Joseph C. Rallo, “Italy,” in Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti, eds., *The Defense Policies of Nations: A Comparative Study*, third edition (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 307.

into the new Italian Republic, and as they had since the 1870s, homogenized opinions to limit substantial public debate or innovation. This time, however, *trasformismo* became less focused on individual personality and more on the political parties themselves, and the Christian Democratic Party in particular.

From its inception, the DC tied Italy inexorably to the West. It did so that by “aligning itself with external economic, military, and institutional partners, Italy began to create the leverage essential to the success of its longer-term objectives.”⁴¹ In 1983, Gianni Bonvicini of the International Affairs Institute (IAI- *Istituto Affari Internazionali*) wrote that “the Christian Democratic party’s long and consistent tenure in power...has become an obstacle to a more critical and innovative Italian participation in the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community.”⁴² This obstacle would only be lifted when a combination of superpower collapse and electoral reform dissolved the Christian Democratic Party in 1992.

⁴¹ Rallo, 307.

⁴² Gianni Bonvicini, “Italy: an integrationist perspective,” in Christopher Hill, ed., *National Foreign Policies and European Political Cooperation* (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1983), 71.

III. ITALY'S POSITION IN THE NATO ALLIANCE

A. "SAILING ALONE" IN THE ALLIANCE?

Italy has been referred to in the 1990s as "the unsinkable aircraft carrier" for NATO.⁴³ It has repeatedly provided men and treasure to support NATO missions. Yet as the identity of NATO has developed since the end of the Cold War⁴⁴, Italy's voice has been absent from the international dialogue on the shape of NATO's future. While its Alliance partners have offered a new definition of NATO as a community of values, with a quest for a "Europe whole and free,"⁴⁵ the Italian government has for the most part kept silent. This chapter will address some of the ways Italy has attempted to develop a voice of its own in foreign policy and examine some of the cases where this attempt has met resistance both domestically and internationally. Examining Italian politics, specifically within the narrow context of NATO relations, uncovers internal and external frictions that have combined to cut out Italian participation in the greater discussion of NATO's future. Internally, there has been a political rift between the parties on the merits of NATO membership and policy. Externally, Italy has been excluded from NATO decision-making bodies. Obviously, the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" is not sailing alone on its own agenda. Yet only by understanding how it has dealt with its limitations can one understand how such a steadfast NATO mission participant can have such a limited voice in European security affairs.

⁴³ Roberto Menotti, "Italy and NATO: The Unsinkable Carrier and the Superpower," in *What Italy Stands For*, Significant Issues Series, Volume XIX, No. 3, (Washington, DC: CSIS, 1997)

⁴⁴ Examined in detail by Sean Kay, in the chapter "NATO after the Cold War," *NATO and the Future of European Security*, (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 59-87.

⁴⁵ A phrase first advanced by American President George Bush in speech in Mainz, Germany after the NATO 40th Anniversary Summit, quoted in the examination of the "Common Values" agenda in Ian Q.R. Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance: NATO and the Political Imagination*, (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 145.

B. THE LEGACY OF THE PCI IN COLLECTIVE SECURITY

The strong presence of the Communist party in Italian politics has been one of the greatest domestic challenges to NATO participation. Although never a member of a majority coalition, the Italian Communist Party (PCI – *Partito Comunista Italiano*) has always remained a left wing challenger for the support base of the Christian Democratic Party (DC – *Partito della Democrazia Cristiana*), which has been part of every ruling coalition from 1948 through its collapse in 1994. In 1949, the PCI officially opposed Italy's membership in NATO. Although, "like other European communist parties, the PCI was created by a Soviet-inspired schism with the Socialists at the Congress of [Livorno] in 1921,"⁴⁶ it did not oppose the creation of NATO solely at the behest of the Soviet Union. While the true extent of Soviet influence in post-war politics is only recently being examined in Italy, it is important to recall from the previous chapter the longstanding Communist presence in Italy. The PCI was not an outright puppet of the Soviets, but a party like any other that represented the will of a portion of the people. Formal opposition to NATO was to many Italian communists a "home grown" conclusion about the best path for their country, and not a mere parroting of Kremlin pronouncements.

The PCI leadership demonstrated this in the 1950s through then party Secretary-General Palmiro Togliatti's call for the development of "an Italian path to socialism" that was eventually labeled "Eurocommunism." The PCI approach has signified "autonomy from a Soviet-led international communist movement, a distinctive party organization, and an essentially parliamentary rather than revolutionary strategy for gaining power in Italy."⁴⁷ Italian communists gravitated further and further from the Soviet orbit as time passed. Offering only reluctant support to the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, they later outright condemned Soviet aggression against the Czechs in 1968.

The distinctly Italian character of the PCI earned it more and more support, with members found across all the social classes of the country. By 1973, their parliamentary

⁴⁶ Michael Harrison, "Government and Politics," in *Italy – A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series (Washington D.C.: US Government, 1987), 277.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

strategy to attain power was led by Enrico Berlinguer, who advocated the “historic compromise,” a broadly based political alliance of the left between the PCI and the DC based on their common experiences as wartime partisan partners. By 1975, the PCI stood a good chance of replacing the DC in Parliament. The United States made its opposition to such an outcome clear through John Volpe, the American ambassador in Rome. In an interview with the Italian magazine *Epoca*, “he stated, in no uncertain terms, the US opposition to the entry of the PCI into the Italian government.”⁴⁸ Volpe thought “a Communist presence would create ‘a basic contradiction’ at the heart of NATO.”⁴⁹ When the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger repeated this view several months later, it caused great indignation in the Italian Press. Berlinguer countered the American uneasiness by stating in an interview of his own that the PCI would not pull Italy out of NATO if it achieved power in the upcoming elections. In fact, he reversed the PCI platform in regard to NATO, stating, with what Paul Ginsbourg has called “astonishing frankness,” that “leaving it would upset the international balance.”⁵⁰ Berlinguer felt that American security guarantees offered the best position in the bi-polar security environment, adding that “I too feel safer being on this side of the fence.”⁵¹

The episode is instructional on several levels. First, it reaffirms the power of the PCI in that it truly represented a substantial bloc of Italian voters; it was not a puppet organization of the Soviets. Second, it shows an awareness, and an indignation, by the Italian voters when they saw American political leaders attempting to influence Italian political life. Most important, however, was the result of the election. The PCI emerged under Berlinguer’s leadership a stronger force in Italian politics than ever before, but it still failed to win a majority in its strongest showing since the end of the Second World War. Both the PCI and the DC, which won the election only by a Herculean political effort, realized that an election that involved foreign policy issues at the forefront, and NATO issues in particular, could have unwanted consequences. Each tacitly resolved not to elevate foreign policy issues to the point of domestic political risk again. As a result of

⁴⁸ Paul Ginsbourg, *A History of Contemporary Italy, Society and Politics 1943-1988*, (London: Penguin Group, 1990), 374.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

this internal situation, Italy was gradually marginalized within NATO itself, unable to have much impact internationally because of the prominence of the PCI in Italian politics.

In 1983, the PCI's vision of Eurocommunism was further refined. After condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the crackdown on the Solidarity movement in Poland, the PCI's sixteenth congress announced a formal break with the Soviet Union. Yet while the announcement removed the Soviet factor completely from Italian politics and cut ties with former Eastern European governments, it "did not mean that [the PCI] has embraced the Atlanticist outlook prevalent among other Italian elites."⁵² In fact, the criticism of NATO switched from matters of mandate and membership to focus on the individual role of Italy in NATO. As a result of this shift, the Italian Parliamentary debate on the admission of Spain into NATO was a relatively painless process. After a minimal debate involving only thirty-one ministers, "the PCI voted against ratification...but the party's anti-enlargement campaign was relatively muted."⁵³

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, however, did have an effect on Italy. The collapse of the power bloc political system changed the vocabulary of political debate once again. While the PCI had long claimed independence from the Soviets, the disappearance of the USSR as a point of reference on the political spectrum caused the PCI to redefine its position as well. It now transformed into the Democrats of the Left (PDS – *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*). In this transformation, however, the PDS lost support from the hard line Marxists that had supported the PCI. "The split between the left wing of the former PCI and the mainstream of the PDS," Menotti finds, "is testimony to the persistence of anti-NATO feelings and Italian fears of U.S. hegemony concerning European affairs."⁵⁴ The establishment of the Refounded Communist Party (RC- *Rifondazione Comunista*) in 1991 shows that many Italians opposed the hegemonic posture of the United States, even in the absence of another established alternative. They did not move to the political center with the creation of the PDS because of their

⁵² Harrison, 278.

⁵³ Roberto Menotti, "Italy: Uneasy Ally" in *Enlarging NATO: The National Debates*, Gale A. Mattox and Arthur R. Rachwald, eds., (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pubs., 2001), 92.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

ideology, and therefore excluded themselves by choice from voicing their opinion about NATO's future.

C. THE BOSNIA CONTACT GROUP

Many Italians hoped that through the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the dialogue about NATO's future would be slow and moderate. However, the expectation that NATO would "play a quiet role as a background security provider in a more cooperative and essentially benign European environment within the post-Soviet era"⁵⁵ proved invalid as tensions in the Balkans erupted. Violence in Bosnia divided Italian politics into two factions: pro-interventionists and anti-interventionists. Activists challenged pacifists who derived their beliefs from the communist or Catholic tradition. Catholics were led by the Vatican's criticism of any policy advocating escalated violence in the region. The DC, just beginning to restructure itself as the PPI, also called for an abstention from involvement in the region.

The government at that time was under the leadership of Silvio Berlusconi, then serving his first term as the Prime Minister, whose center-right coalition favored intervention. Under Berlusconi, the Italian government backed the majority consensus among NATO states in support of intervention in Bosnia. Italy offered use of airspace and military bases in direct support of the air campaign against Serb targets in Bosnia, "accepting the significant financial, logistical, and political costs that accompanied such a policy."⁵⁶ Yet although the Italians built and staffed the Combined Air Operations Center that oversaw all NATO air traffic in the Balkans, this effort was not sufficient to gain a post in the initial Contact Group to Yugoslavia in 1994.

Exclusion from the Contact Group caused surprise and resentment, in a manner similar to the reaction against Kissinger's pronouncements against the PCI a decade earlier. Italian efforts were perceived to be unappreciated, but reaction simmered. It was not until September 1995 that a diplomatic riposte was made. At that time, Foreign Minister Susanna Agnelli announced that Italy would deny the use of its airbases for

⁵⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 94.

future flights by “stealth” bombers, F-117s, against targets in Bosnia. It is important to note, however, that the measure did not criticize or threaten to revoke support for the air campaign. Italy still fell in line with the NATO majority, and the measure was perceived solely as an opportunity to make a point, as “the Italian government stated that any new commitments regarding the F-117s would require a review of Italy’s role at the negotiating table, which Italian leaders considered to be ‘not commensurate’ with its overall contribution to the alliance.”⁵⁷

The episode is instructive in that it displays Italian governmental attitudes on several levels. First, it cannot be denied that in the Bosnia campaign Italy provided resources first and then asked for a policy voice much later. This shows a depth of commitment to the smooth functioning of the Alliance as a whole, but a limited ability for Italy to dictate NATO policy. Second, it shows that despite the apparent rebut it had suffered from its international partners, Italy was not willing to view the episode as a challenge to its “national honor.” Italy’s relatively well-mannered response reveals a willingness to subordinate national pride to the greater good of an international organization. It made a firm, but small assertion of opinion in an international forum, yet none whatsoever within the context of the national political arena. Italy had been excluded by its partners from a security debate in a region to which it had close historical connections, but only made a tempered protest as a result.

D. NATO COMMAND CONTROVERSY

Italy’s role in the Allied Forces South (AFSOUTH) command controversy has also shown how it perceives itself as a NATO member. The commander (CINCSOUTH), headquartered just north of Naples in Gaeta, has traditionally been an American, with an Italian deputy commander (the COMNAVSOUTH). Andreas Corti, former Chief of Staff to the Italian Under-Secretary of Defense, and Alessandro Politi, of the Institute for Security Studies of the Western European Union, noted in their study on Italy’s Command Structure that, by 1993, “the reform of the higher command structures

⁵⁷ Ibid, 94.

[was becoming] the centerpiece of the strategy by which the Italian military is being forced to deal with an ever-shrinking budget and the possibility of drastic changes to the fundamental structure of the Armed Forces themselves.”⁵⁸ While it was apparent that command structure reform was warranted, however, the Italian response in the AFSOUTH controversy proved that there was little support to do this at the expense of losing influence in NATO.

In late 1996, Presidents Bill Clinton and Jacques Chirac engaged in a debate over the future of the AFSOUTH command billet. Using the debate on restructuring and reducing NATO regional commands as an opportunity, Chirac brought forth a longstanding French proposal to change the traditional allotment of commands based solely on national troop contributions.⁵⁹ Chirac proposed that the billet rotate among Alliance partners equally, with the presumption that France be the next to provide a representative. The French President used American pressure for greater European burden sharing, and the strengthening of the European pillar, as the impetus to resurrect the proposal. In doing so, he returned the issue to the public eye, and forced all parties to take a justified position for public consumption.

The United States has an interest to see the CINCSOUTH billet remain in the hands of the American Navy because of its own tactical organization in the region. The AFSOUTH Commander is also the Commander of the Sixth US Fleet, a carrier battle group of sizeable potency that, in addition to NATO security commitments, is tasked with defending American interests in the Middle East and Africa. As the fleet is charged with implementing unilateral American action in these volatile regions, the United States has refused to place these ships under foreign command. France’s proposition that the command rotate among partners threatened to do just that.

Italy took a very clear, moderate line. In February 1997, the Foreign Minister and Defense Minister “declared to a joint session of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committees of the Italian parliament that, although Italy fully supports the development

⁵⁸ Andreas Corti and Alessandro Politi, “Italy’s Command Structure,” in Thomas-Durell Young, ed., *Command in NATO after the Cold War: Alliance, National, and Multinational Considerations*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA, Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 168.

⁵⁹ For a brief history of this structure, see David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance’s New Roles in International Security*, (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 380-381.

of a stronger European security identity, there should be no rush to establish new operational agreements within NATO.”⁶⁰ In doing so, they came out in explicit support of the American refusal of the French proposal. The decision was unsurprising, considering that a rotation of the AFSOUTH command billet would likely also call for a rotation of the commander of naval forces in the southern region, the COMNAVSOUTH billet, which has been held by an Italian since 1967. Adoption of the French plan would have possibly made the regional command more European in character, but it would certainly have directly reduced the influence and prestige of Italy on a permanent basis. As in the Contact Group experience, Italy would not willingly seek to exclude itself from a position of influence in the Balkans.

However, like the Contact Group response, the argument set forth to refute the French AFSOUTH command proposal is significant in its moderation. Italian diplomats and pundits thought the French had overstepped their bounds in raising the proposal, since it was not brought up as an issue when the idea of strengthening the European pillar through reorganization was first discussed. Chirac’s call was seen by many as an unpleasant surprise in a larger harmonious framework of negotiations. Yet neither the Italian government or NATO mission openly criticized the French for their unwelcome proposal. Nor did they make historical arguments on the geostrategic strength of Italy in the Mediterranean to maintain their own command billet. Their response was completely moderate and inoffensive to all, as “the Rome government only had to remark that, lacking a reliable European infrastructural capability that could perform NATO-like functions, the time [was] not ripe, from a military and organizational point of view, for a radical reform of the Southern Command.”⁶¹

E. REACHING OUT TO RUSSIA

Reaction was also mild when in the same month, Chirac proposed a directorate that would bypass the formal NATO decision making process and called for a summit on

⁶⁰ Roberto Menotti, “Italy and NATO: The Unsinkable Carrier and the Superpower,” in *What Italy Stands For*, Significant Issues Series, Volume XIX, No. 3, (Washington, DC: CSIS, 1997), 21.

⁶¹ Menotti, “Italy and NATO,” 22.

NATO-Russia relations that included only France, Britain, Germany, and The United States as the NATO representatives. The Italian Foreign Minister, Lamberto Dini addressed the issue in an open letter to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, saying “that it entailed a serious risk ‘for inter-allied cohesion and solidarity and, above all, for Italy which could be excluded, de facto, from a decision making process that concerns her in a most delicate dimension, that of her defense and security.’”⁶² Here again, Italy was being excluded from the strategic debate on the future of the Alliance. Unlike the issue of command structure, where the threat to Italian participation was merely implicit, in this case Italy was explicitly being excluded. The future roles and missions of NATO were to be discussed, as they were in the former Yugoslavia Contact Group just three years earlier. Italy had at this point just gained entry in that group after initial exclusion by the American proposal, and was now being excluded from a debate of even greater significance by fellow Europeans.

F. OPERATION ALBA

Exclusion within NATO became even more pronounced during the Albanian economic and political crisis of 1997. At that time, most Albanian citizens had lost all their savings as economic reform hit a dead end. Prompted by the failure of financial pyramid schemes, the government collapsed, and violence prevailed. Tensions escalated to the point that a Socialist representative in parliament was shot, and a Democratic minister killed, in an argument on the Parliament floor. The nation had clearly collapsed, and in doing so, posed a unique security threat to Italy, only 40 miles away across the Adriatic.⁶³ As the closest member of the European Union, many in Italy rightly expected that they would be the recipients of either Albanian emigrants or refugees, depending upon the escalation of domestic violence.

⁶² Menotti, “Italy: Uneasy Ally,” 95.

⁶³ Albania has had longstanding cultural and commercial ties with Italy that predate the zenith of the Venetian Republic from 1200-1500. Larry Wolff’s *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001) offers a detailed account of the depth of these connections.

Containing destabilization in Albania was clearly in European interests, yet NATO did not define it as an “out-of-area” mission where it would seek to get involved. David Yost points out that the Albanian crisis “helped to illustrate the limits to the ‘security is indivisible’ pledges of the Allies and the other participants in the new Euro-Atlantic security structures. No multinational intervention will be possible unless a coalition of the willing, within or outside an international organization, is prepared to undertake it.”⁶⁴ Unlike Bosnia, the level of violence was not perceived to be great enough that it warranted NATO involvement, even though as the situation deteriorated, it became more and more apparent that foreign troops would be necessary to help reestablish domestic Albanian order. There is an interesting corollary that as the level of violence in Albania increased, there was an almost equal increase in British and American policy statements that they would not seek to become directly involved in Albania. The British, in particular, made public their refusal to send troops into the embattled country. Despite the very recent lesson learned by United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the WEU in Bosnia, NATO again chose not to live up to its own rhetoric as the preeminent European security institution, and deferred to the EU to take the lead for the peace building mission. In the end, the Italians themselves led Operation Alba, with the participation of eleven other nations, after it was “specifically requested by the Albanian government, deliberated and approved by the EU Council of Ministers, and then given a precise mandate by OSCE and the United Nations Security Council.”⁶⁵ Operation Alba included NATO nations primarily from the Mediterranean belt, from Portugal to Turkey, and non-NATO members, like Austria and Romania, with historical or geostrategic ties to the area in crisis. On the whole, “the NATO Allies commended the Italian-led Multinational Protection Force and offered political support, but chose not to undertake an Alliance operation.”⁶⁶

It is difficult to understand why the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) declined to serve as the coordinating body for Operation Alba. Enough NATO and non-NATO members participated in the response that the strategic importance of the collapse

⁶⁴ Yost, 235.

⁶⁵ Frederico Eichberg, “Sunrise or Sunset? Albania is One of Italy’s Problems,” in *Italy and the Balkans*, Significant Issues Series, Volume XX, No. 2, (Washington, DC: CSIS, 1998), 58.

⁶⁶ Yost, 235.

of the Albanian government seems self-evident. The eleven participating nations thought that peace building in Albania was significant enough to make it the “recipient of the highest per capita aid...in all of Eastern Europe ([European Currency Unit] ECU 270...compared with the average yearly income of \$550).”⁶⁷ Such massive economic assistance does not explain why three of NATO’s strongest economies, the United States, Germany, and Great Britain, failed to participate. Because it was a “humanitarian-plus” mission, the NACC may have seen it as lying outside their purview. Yet the UN mandate provided for a military command, the International Forces in Albania Operative Command (COFIA), and the mission initially imposed civil order by establishing a de facto martial law. NATO’s IFOR was obviously involved in such operations in the same theater, and none of the Allies were overtaxed for military commitments – proven by the fact that forces were provided for a unique mission in Albania. An Italian fear of marginalization is therefore probably deserved, as the Albanian case implied that if Balkan destabilization is an apparent security threat to Italy, NATO will not respond if Italy is the party advocating intervention, despite the fact that the mission would set no precedent for NATO.

G. THE ENLARGEMENT DEBATE

Exclusion of Italian concerns also became apparent in the subsequent debate on NATO expansion. NATO policy differed with the Italian perspective not only about which countries would be offered membership, but how expansion was going to take place. Italy, along with France, advocated the membership of states along the “southern flank,” closely tied to the Mediterranean region. Italy gave its strongest support for Slovenia and Romania in the dialogues for NATO admission in 1997. Neither nation was offered admission in 1999, when the “central corridor” states of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic were admitted after strong lobbying on their behalf by Germany and the Northern European NATO states.

⁶⁷ Eichberg, 57. The ECU was a fixed EU currency average for financial comparisons. In many ways, the precursor to the modern Euro.

According to Piero Fassino, then Italy's Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs in charge of European politics, Slovenia, the more strongly supported of the two, was proposed for entry not only because it created a land bridge of NATO territory to Hungary, but also because it "is located at the intersection of one of the major east-west infrastructural axes (Corridor Five, which will connect Lisbon to Kiev)," and that because Slovenia was never a Warsaw Pact state, its admission would "serve to relieve Moscow's suspicions" that NATO was looking to simply annex former states of the Warsaw Pact.⁶⁸ Such a strong concern for Russian opinion set Italian politicians apart from the majority opinion in NATO. Italian concern for Russian opinion stems from political and commercial connections. Politically, many were concerned that "Russia will one day be a great power again and its geography and history dictate it will be a European power."⁶⁹ Commercially, "Italian businesses have developed substantial economic stakes in Russia in recent years, and officials have a keen interest in cultivating these economic ties."⁷⁰ Foreign Minister Dini was so direct in his advocacy of gaining Russian approval and "Italian diplomatic efforts toward Russia were so overt as to cause some friction between Italy and the Central European NATO candidates."⁷¹ Poland complained bitterly about a "Russia-first" orientation in Rome, ending only when President Kwasniewski was promised Italy's full support in advancing the Polish application for membership.

The Italian government had hoped for a long, slow approach to NATO expansion, and was somewhat taken aback when President Clinton had pushed it forward on the NATO agenda. Italy was a strong advocate of the Partnership for Peace program. It had supported "a slow-moving enlargement of NATO (based on Partnership for Peace as a clearinghouse) as the best option, especially when considered with the enlargement of the European Union"⁷² Italy looked at the PfP program to serve not only as the primary testing ground for establishing firm entry criteria for new nations, but more importantly,

⁶⁸ Piero Fassino, "Italy's New Ostpolitik" in *What Italy Stands For*, Significant Issues Series, Volume XIX, No. 3, (Washington, DC: CSIS, 1997), 43.

⁶⁹ Patrick McCarthy, "An Autonomous Foreign Policy for a Changing Italy," *The International Spectator*, Volume XXXV, No. 3, (Bologna: Istituto Affari Internazionali, Jul-Sep 2000), 94.

⁷⁰ Menotti, "Italy: Uneasy Ally," 100.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 101.

to create a comprehensive doctrine for expansion on the part of the existing Alliance members. Pushed as it now was, Italy advocated the countries it saw were in its strategic interest to represent, both in terms of the Alliance as a whole, and in the south to increase the significance of the Mediterranean and the importance of Italian participation. Dini's expression of concern about Russia was adopted across the Alliance with the creation of the NATO –Russia Permanent Joint Council. Although not voiced as strongly in many places outside of Italy, Russian opinion on enlargement was, and remains, a common concern to all members of the Alliance. Italian advocacy of the Mediterranean region, however, was not accepted. As a result of the expansion debate, Italy appeared to its partners to be overly concerned with the opinion of a former adversary, and was marginalized even further as an advocate of a region that failed to obtain NATO membership at that time.

H. THE KOSOVO CRISIS

The significance of Italy, and of her vision of Mediterranean security, changed with the onset of the Kosovo crisis. In Kosovo, latent ethnic political unrest exploded into open warfare between the army of the Former Yugoslavia and ethnic Albanian Kosovar separatist groups. The escalation of armed conflict to the point that “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” were of constant mention in the media ensured NATO involvement. Where Italy could not find the necessary support in the NACC for NATO to lead the effort in Albania, the NAC was now making requests to Italy.

The Italian government's response shows that there were still exclusionary forces at work inside Rome. Massimo D'Alema, the Prime Minister at the time the Kosovo crisis erupted, was the first elected Prime Minister to have once been a member of the PCI, and the Refounded Communists had strong representation in his parliamentary majority. The RC had not abandoned the PCI's distaste for NATO as an organization, and even up until 1999 they were calling for its dissolution. When NATO decided to begin a bombing campaign to intervene on behalf of the Albanian Kosovars, the members of the RC did not initially support it. Despite the political pressure, however, Italy once

again provided planes and airbases as it had in the Bosnian crisis. After the experiences of the Contact Group and Operation Alba, “Italy’s fear of exclusion was a critical element in the decision by the Massimo D’Alema government to support NATO’s policy of ‘diplomacy backed by force’ toward Belgrade”⁷³ Yet sympathy among the Refounded Communists for the former communists in Belgrade were apparent. As a result, they capitalized on the NACC’s choice not to seek a UN mandate before committing troops, and pushed legislation through Parliament that restricted the Italian Army’s employment to “defensive purposes” only. In practice, however, the Italians assumed responsibility for much of the mission’s ground forces. Italy assumed operational control for one quarter of the embattled province. Their zone of authority, KFOR’s Multi-National Brigade West (MNB-West) sector, abutted directly against Albania, the primary source of money and materiel for the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK). Although MNB-West has no major population or government centers, its position on the extreme edge of Serbia made it the scene of many of the Yugoslavian Army’s most infamous human rights abuses against fleeing refugees. In addition, Italian *Carabinieri*, the National Police Force, have been dispatched throughout the region and helped form the nucleus, with other military police forces, of the civilian police presence eventually established by the United Nations. These contributions to burden sharing remain comparatively invisible to all but the closest observers of the Kosovo mission. In the eyes of fellow NATO governments, “Italy abroad is still weaker than its potential. The sleight of hand used during the Kosovo war shows Italy’s allies abroad that Italy was an active fighting collaborator while pretending to the government’s coalition partners at home that it was being merely defensive did not enhance the country’s reputation.”⁷⁴ Obviously, exclusionary forces are still at work within Italy that shape its involvement in NATO participation.

⁷³ Ibid., 105.

⁷⁴ James Watson, “Can Italy Make It in the First Division?” *The International Spectator*, Volume XXXV, No. 4 (Bologna: Istituto Affari Internazionali, Oct-Dec 2000), 3.

I. DOMESTIC POLITICAL TURMOIL

Italy's voice in NATO policy has been constrained by other factors as well. No state's foreign policy is developed in a domestic policy vacuum, and Italy is no exception. Italy's government has often been distracted from a more active role in foreign affairs by domestic instability. In the 1970s, the "years of lead," the activity of the Red Brigades long preoccupied the attention, and challenged the international image, of the government. Government credibility at home and abroad was severely limited when the Brigades captured and killed the Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, in 1977, and then held an American NATO General hostage several years later. In the 1980s the anticorruption campaign Clean Hands (*Mani Pulite*), which exposed a number of corrupt government officials, and eventually brought the downfall of the Christian Democrats, certainly eroded the authority of the Italian government in the eyes of other nation states. As noted in the previous chapter, these frictions within Italian society cannot be ignored, as the purely domestic political environment does have direct consequences for national foreign policy platforms. These internal problems impacted Italian prestige abroad and surely have played their part in marginalizing Italy within NATO.

J. SILENT COMMITMENT

In regard to NATO, the internal and external sources of friction for Italy are clear. Internally, the active presence of the PCI in Parliamentary politics meant that there were always representatives present who opposed NATO itself, or Italy's direct involvement in a NATO mission. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, communist party influence has been sufficient to shape the character of Italian participation in NATO missions, most recently in Kosovo. Above all, there has been a legacy of avoiding debate on NATO issues, as both sides of the aisle realize there is little to be gained by shaking up the existing coalitions in the Italian Parliament over issues of this kind. The AFSOUTH Command controversy was muted, and did not become a domestic political issue. Italian political leaders have excluded themselves from a greater foreign policy

debate because of the potential political costs involved. This mindset was only reinforced after the current Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, appointed himself to the position of Foreign Minister in addition to his normal duties. Berlusconi assumed the position after Renato Ruggiero resigned in protest to the intemperate speech of Umberto Bossi, the leader of the Northern League and a coalition partner of the Berlusconi government⁷⁵. While not the first time this has occurred in Italy, Berlusconi's intervention lasted for ten months, and at no time was he forced to reverse his decision or nominate a replacement Minister by either the President or the Parliament.

Externally, both the United States and Italy's European allies have locked Italy out of crucial discussion on the future direction of NATO. Italy was only reluctantly included in dialogue on future NATO policy for both Bosnia and Russia despite strong connections to both regions. When a direct security threat, in the form of Albanian destabilization, emerged, NATO declined to synchronize intervention efforts. Nor did NATO as a collective body accept Italian recommendations with respect to NATO expansion, either in form or result. In the end, Italy and the Mediterranean region it represents were comparatively marginalized.

Successive Italian governments have responded to these episodes of exclusion with conspicuous moderation. Although Italy has repeatedly been left out of debates where it feels, reasonably, that it has a strategic interest, it has never responded with Gaullist indignation. Rather, Italy has continued to provide men and materiel in substantial quantity to support every emerging NATO mission. Despite good cause to take offense, Italy has repeatedly chosen to soldier on obediently when NATO calls. It is by this measure that the true depth of commitment to the Alliance can be seen. While the Italian government has usually offered little in the way of vision for the future of NATO since the end of the Cold War, it is certainly committed to the cause of the Alliance itself. Despite recurring episodes of domestic political frictions and international disregard, it has repeatedly demonstrated the belief that NATO remains the strongest forum for security issues in the European arena, and acted on that belief.

⁷⁵ This episode is best recounted in Osvaldo Croci's article "The Second Berlusconi Government and Italian Foreign Policy," in *The International Spectator*, 2/2002.

IV. ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES: AN ASSERTION OF IDENTITY

A. A LEGACY OF FEALTY

Since the end of the Second World War, Italy has been the only major European state content with the United States dictating the overall direction of its foreign policy. While the notable acts of cooperation of British Prime Ministers Thatcher and Blair with the United States appear to stand out as an exception, they are really examples of partnership. Italian cooperation has not taken the form of co-authoring initiatives, but endorsing them once sanctioned by the United States. Foreign policy goals have rarely become the lead issue for any Italian administration, and the desire to maintain the “special relationship” between the United States and Italy has generally muted any dispute. Policy agreement resembles fealty rather than partnership, and Italy remains the only G7 NATO member whose support for American policy is all but unconditionally guaranteed.

The United States currently enjoys close cooperation with Italian authorities in prosecuting the war on terrorism and has received formal promises of Italian support for its initiatives in pursuing the disarmament of Iraq. The most public pronouncement of the latter occurred on January 30, 2003 in an open letter to the United States published in the Wall Street Journal titled “United We Stand.” Signed by eight European heads of state, the letter implicitly endorsed the US position in the ongoing UN Security Council debate about the progress of Iraqi disarmament inspections and the possible use of international armed force to ensure further Iraqi compliance. Stating “today more than ever, the trans-Atlantic bond is a guarantee of our freedom,”⁷⁶ the signature of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi placed his support and that of the Italian Armed forces firmly among the Bush Administration’s “coalition of the willing” that threatens the use of force in the event of Iraqi noncompliance with the UN disarmament inspection program. With an armed force of 230,000, Italy’s support made it the largest military commitment to US

⁷⁶ Jose Maria Aznar, et al., “United We Stand,” Wall Street Journal, p.A14, New York, NY; Jan 30, 2003 (at: <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=1044317461&RQT=309&CC=2&Dtp=1&Did=000000>, 3 Feb 2003)

support among the NATO Allies.⁷⁷ On a personal visit to the White House the day following the open letter, Berlusconi reaffirmed his personal support to “his best friend [President Bush], in the country that is the best, best friend of my country.”⁷⁸

While these actions dictate a harmony of foreign policy goals, it would be naïve to view these actions as further instances of unquestioned national support for the American agenda. Since the end of the Cold War, the absence of bloc power politics has created ideological “elbow-room” for a domestic discussion of foreign policy objectives in Italy and an increasingly strong concept of national interest. With increasing speed and fervor, Italian society and its political leadership continue to develop goals and ideas that are less dependant on foreign influence or reaction than has been the case in the past. While Prime Minister Berlusconi’s pledge of support is unquestionably clear, it carries less ideological fealty behind it than pro-American statements of the past. The collapse of the Soviet Union and a growing concept of national interest in Italy have combined to change the basis of Italian-American cooperation. While as partners there is still an inequality of means, the developing independent agenda in Italy will reduce American influence to be an equally competing perspective in the national policy debate.

B. THE EROSION OF AMERICAN DEPENDENCE

After the Second World War, the major political parties of the right Christian Democrats and the left Italian Communist party were each supported by one of the two superpowers. Both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to influence Italian domestic politics prior to the first elections in the post-war republic. American covert intrusion in domestic Italian politics began in December 1947, when “the National Security Council [NSC] gave the [Central Intelligence Agency] CIA the authority to undertake ‘covert psychological operations designed to counteract Soviet and Soviet-

⁷⁷ “Al fianco degli Stati uniti,” *La Repubblica*, 31 Jan 2003. This chart, encompassing statistics on the eight NATO nations that signed the “United We Stand” open letter, lists “armed forces” as follows: Italy: 230,000, Great Britain: 211,000, Poland: 206,000, Spain: 143,000, Czech Republic: 53,000, Portugal: 43,000, Hungary: 33,000, and Denmark: 21,000. The Czech pledge was later withdrawn after national elections, consequentially increasing the importance of the Italian pledge to the coalition.

⁷⁸ Barbara Jerkov, “Berlusconi: ‘Siamo con Bush, la guerra forse entro un mese’: il premier alla Casa Bianca,” in *La Repubblica*, p. 2, 31 Jan 2003.

inspired activities.”⁷⁹ Compared to activities in other Western European states, “in Italy, the US undertook a far greater degree of intervention, organizing an extensive program of economic, military, and political support for [Christian Democrat candidate] De Gasperi.”⁸⁰ Covert financial support was replaced by overt diplomatic messages just before the election, when “George Marshall...declared that if Italy went Communist, Italians would get no further aid.”⁸¹ Even into the 1970s, such overt pressure was applied whenever the pro-American Christian Democratic Party was threatened⁸². Coupled with the actions of Italian communists, notably Enrico Berlinguer, who distanced themselves from Soviet expansionism, pro-American policies were dominant in Italian foreign policy throughout the Cold War.

Roberto Aliboni, of the Institute of International Affairs, points out that “it is a commonplace to point out that Italy’s foreign policy during the Cold War was almost solely conducted along the lines and within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community.”⁸³ He advances the argument that up through the 1980s, a feeling of comparative weakness to its European neighbors led Italy to compensate by staying close to US policy. In doing so, Italy did more than ensure its position in Europe, since “because of its geopolitical situation, Italy was able to obtain from the Alliance, and ‘consume’ for its national security, a good deal more than it ever could ‘produce’ and provide for the sake of the Alliance itself.”⁸⁴ Aliboni believes that the strong linkage between national interest and multilateralism is the determining factor for Italian policy development in the future. Most importantly, however, “the question is not whether Italy was unable or unwilling to assert the right quantum of national interests in the alliances

⁷⁹ William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-2002*, (New York, Doubleday, 2003), 91.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, 92.

⁸² Paul Ginsbourg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, (London, Penguin, 1990), 374.

⁸³ Roberto Aliboni, “Italy and the Mediterranean in the 1990s,” in Stelios Stavridis, et al, eds., *The Foreign Policies of the European Union’s Mediterranean States and Applicant Countries in the 1990s*, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1999), 74.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

but whether it was able to respond over time to changes in the international situation and growing demands...for new burdens to be shared and additional resources to be contributed.”⁸⁵

C. THE COLD WAR *STATUS QUO*

In his primer on geopolitics, General Carlo Jean, while with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), stated that “in reality it is easy to discern the two fundamental criteria that have guided the ‘geopolitics’ of the First Republic,”⁸⁶ describing them as the maintenance of a privileged relationship with the United States to “play” against either national hegemony or European “direction,” and a corollary of “maintaining (or at least demonstrating) a complete alignment of position with Washington in transatlantic relations and in all military-strategic questions.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, the underlying motives for these two criteria were to “obtain a ‘free hand’ in commercial expansion ‘out of area’ at the expense of European solidarity...[and] to limit to the lowest possible level their own contribution to common security, maintaining the lowest relative level of military spending.”⁸⁸ Italian foreign policy therefore accepted a “free rider” status from American security guarantees as long as its unique commercial interests were protected and its vulnerability was not increased. Begrudgingly or it, Italians accepted American political actions as long as these preconditions were met. This rationale would become self evident, and open for public debate, with the crisis between Italian goals and American methods at Sigonella.

D. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SIGONELLA

The Sigonella Incident of October 1985 marks the beginning of the end of American Cold War influence on Italian foreign policy. More familiar to Americans as the “Achille Lauro Affair,” the armed standoff between Italian and American soldiers for

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Carlo Jean, *Geopolitica*, (Bologna, Laterza, 1996), 249.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

control of jurisdiction over captured Palestinian terrorists demonstrated the first clear split among shared perceptions. The episode stands both as an assertion of Italian political will in direct contrast to American influence, and an example of the relative American inattention to sentiments in Italy that resulted in conflict, and not cooperation, among allies.

The incident began when four gunmen of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) seized the *Achille Lauro*, an Italian ship from Genoa on a cruise of the eastern Mediterranean, on the afternoon of October 7, 1985. Having disembarked most of its passengers for a day excursion, the ship had left the Egyptian port of Alexandria en route to Port Said when it was hijacked. According to statements given by the hijackers, the group had planned to disembark later along the cruise in the Israeli port of Ashdod for a different mission, but had been surprised by a waiter while cleaning their weapons and improvised a strategy while at sea.

The PLF was a faction of the larger Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yassir Arafat. Arafat's political allies had been increasingly bothersome to the Reagan administration since the previous summer, when an American TWA jetliner was hijacked to Beirut and 37 hostages had been hidden throughout the city in a 17-day ordeal. Based on the relief expressed in Congress after the incident, the Reagan administration was under great pressure to resolve this incident efficiently and reaffirm an image of America's strength. According to testimony by Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, on the day of the hijacking "the American authorities themselves...expressly requested the Italian government to [pressure Arafat] to announce publicly he had no part in the act of terrorism."⁸⁹ The US also requested Italian diplomatic pressure be applied to deny the ship an anchorage in either a Syrian or Jordanian port. The Italian government did so, and after a combined effort the *Achille Lauro* was denied entry when it attempted to enter the Syrian port of Tartus the following day.

After moving the ship seven miles off the Syrian coast, the hijackers chose to execute one of the passengers. Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair-bound Jewish American,

⁸⁹ Antonio Cassese, *Terrorism, Politics, and the Law: The Achille Lauro Affair*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989) 26.

was shot and dumped overboard on October 8th. Later that evening, however, the ship's captain apparently lied during a radio communication with the Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti and claimed that all passengers and crew were doing well. Believing no lethal violence had occurred, the Italian government pressed on with negotiations with the PLF gunmen. Italian officials were joined by the Egyptian government of Hosni Mubarak, which had itself been contacted by the PLF group leader, Abul Abbas and an advisor to Arafat, Hani el-Hassan. After some negotiation, "Italy agreed to go along with Egypt in offering safe passage to the hijackers on one condition: that there had been no killing aboard the *Achille Lauro*."⁹⁰ On Abul Abbas' orders, the four gunmen surrendered on the afternoon of October 9th and were taken to Cairo. Only after the hijackers had left the ship, when the captain telephoned Prime Minister Craxi and the American Ambassador to Egypt inspected the ship at Port Said, did the Italian and American governments have full knowledge that Klinghoffer had been killed.

The events that followed drove the Italian and American governments apart. On October 10th the four gunmen were escorted aboard an Egypt Air Boeing 737, "accompanied by two representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization [Abbas and Hassan] and a number of Egyptian diplomats and security officials."⁹¹ The plane was apparently bound for Tunis, then home to the PLO headquarters, but denied permission to land. After receiving a similar denial from Athens, the jet was intercepted by four F-14 Tomcats from the USS *Saratoga* and instructed by a US Navy E-2C Hawkeye radar plane to follow the sortie to Sigonella Air Base in Sicily and land. By some accounts, President Reagan telephoned Prime Minister Craxi at midnight to obtain permission for the aircraft to land, and Craxi complied, now hoping to bring known murders to justice. The four F-14s did not land, but "instead, two US military transport C141 planes carrying troops arrived to meet the Egyptian plane. As soon as the Boeing landed, it was surrounded by 50 Italian soldiers serving at the base; these, in turn, were surrounded by 50 American soldiers 'armed and ready' ...receiving orders...directly from Washington over the radio."⁹² The American commander on site, General Carl Stiner,

⁹⁰ George Russell, "The U.S. Sends a Message," *Time*, (October 21, 1985), 25.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹² Cassese, 38.

was instructed to arrest the terrorists and return them to the United States. The Italian authorities refused to comply, and direct communication between Reagan and Craxi was required to resolve the situation.

In his examination of the case, Antonio Cassese points out that despite an initial effort of Reagan and Craxi's governments to coordinate action against the terrorists, "the requirements, interests and political postures of each state drifted apart, and each actor followed its own 'individualistic' bent."⁹³ Craxi refused to hand over the PLF hijackers to American forces, believing a crime on an Italian ship merited a trial in Italian court. Yet real policy division

occurred when Craxi denied an express request from Reagan himself to detain the PLO representatives that accompanied them. Abul Abbas, in particular, was a wanted terrorist by the FBI.

For the Italian part, Cassese argues that in failing to apprehend Abul Abbas, the Craxi government failed to uphold the intent of Article 12 of the 1983 Extradition Treaty with the United States, which allows for the provisional arrest of a suspect by one nation at the request of another. He believes that in failing to address Abbas' role, Italy abandoned a rigid adherence to international standards it had shown throughout the crisis in order to "forestall [future] attacks in Italy and free the Achille Lauro from its harrowing ordeal"⁹⁴ as it was then in Egyptian custody. Craxi took this decision largely in order "not to damage Italy's good relations with the Arab states and the PLO...an integral part of Italy's Mediterranean foreign policy."⁹⁵ Such a conclusion would then mark the episode as the first significant occasion that American wishes were pushed aside in the pursuit of uniquely Italian foreign policy aims.

On the other hand, Cassese argues that the final departure of Abbas shows an ugly side to American policy. As if the armed standoff at Sigonella was not enough drama, when the Egypt Air Boeing departed with Abbas and the Egyptian delegation for Rome as the merits of the extradition case were reviewed, it was followed by more Navy F-14 Tomcats, who were in turn followed by Italian Tornados. In order to prevent further

⁹³ Ibid., 145.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 102.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 84.

friction between the two states, Abbas was finally taken out of the country on a Yugoslavian commercial airliner. Cassese believes “the American use of force against the Egyptian airliner was all the more deplorable since rational and peaceful alternatives that could have produced similar results did exist.”⁹⁶ . In an opinion now widely held among Italians reflecting on the incident, he concludes “the United States preferred violence to law, leaving behind an unfortunate legacy that has polluted international law and aggravated political and diplomatic relations between states.”⁹⁷

In Italian political shorthand, “Sigonella” usually connotes an American willingness to resort to force to support national self interest over respect for allies or international law. John Holmes, who served as the State Department deputy chief of mission in the embassy in Rome from 1985 to 1990, believes such an attitude originates in “American official neglect of Italy”⁹⁸ that stems from Italy serving as a benign host to American bases and the lack of close personal relationships between each country’s leaders. Holmes faults the Italians for releasing Abul Abbas, but notes “the point is that the United States was essentially indifferent to Italian interests and, indeed, not too interested in Italian cooperation. What we wanted of Italy, when we gave it a thought, was passivity, but...we overshot and expected Italy to stay silent when its pride was affronted and its own interests jeopardized.”⁹⁹ The lesson for the Italians was clear. The exercise of military muscle in an ally’s territory when neither American lives nor property were at stake would be downplayed but not be forgotten. Their Cold War partner obviously thought little of Italian sovereignty or international law when it conflicted with American self-image or policy goals. Most significantly, it proved to the Italians themselves that “there was a limit to Italian pliability and that Washington’s inattention to Italy made it prone to err.”¹⁰⁰ As a stronger national identity develops in the future, this lesson has significant future consequences.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 79.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 80.

⁹⁸ John Holmes, “Can Italy Change Yet Remain Stable?,” in *Mediterranean Quarterly*, (Spring 1993), 58.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 60.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 60.

E. THE END OF COLD WAR PARADIGMS

In many ways, the reappraisal of national interests and the renewed energy with which those interests were made manifest in foreign policy was not a uniquely Italian phenomenon. A redefinition of goals and reordering of priorities occurred in the Soviet Union at the same time. In the Soviet case, the questioning of Cold War political paradigms eventually led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In the Italian experience, old political models also became open to debate. Foreign policy development had its own “glasnost” that opened it to democratic participation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the effects within Italy on foreign policy democratization were as fuel thrown on a fire. Whereas “Italian foreign policy during the Cold War era reflected and froze public opinion cleavages,”¹⁰¹ citizens and their leaders gained an ideological freedom to maneuver. In the past, “in order to overcome the paralyzing constraints that such cleavages imposed on decision makers, Italian foreign policy was characterized by a secretive, insulated decision making process.”¹⁰² The absence of bloc power politics and the necessity for hard security guarantees opened the foreign policy debate for unrestricted public participation and the promulgation of emerging visions of national interests and goals.

In the 1980s, the United States “remained Italy’s great protector, and Italian governments remained too weak to think seriously about a future in which the United States might withdraw, leaving Italy to construct a foreign policy of its own.”¹⁰³ Italy began to assert a distinctly national opinion, however, as Cold War tensions began to thaw. Gorbachev’s perestroika was popularly received in Italy because it appealed powerfully to two strong social influences: Catholicism and communism. In the Veneto, the economic motor of the Italian northeast, Gorbachev’s unilateral troop reductions were well received not only because it put the region in less physical danger on NATO’s

¹⁰¹ Pierangelo Isernia, “Where Angels Fear to Tread,” in *Decisionmaking in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion, and American and European Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, Brigitte L. Nacos, et al, eds., (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 295.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Patrick McCarthy, “Italy” in *Europe Today: National Politics, European Integration, and European Security*, Ronald Tiersky, ed., (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 150.

southern flank, but because the message of peace struck a positive chord in the “white quadrilateral”¹⁰⁴ of this heavily Catholic area. In the “red triangle” of predominantly communist sympathy, stretching from Bologna to Tuscany and Milan, Gorbachev’s new face for the Communist Party was seen as agreement with the “road to socialism” of Togliatti and the Eurocommunism of Berlinguer. Tellingly, “at the end of the Cold War the United States was still more liked and trusted than the Soviet Union, but the Italian public was also more critical of American behavior in the international system, more reluctant to trust its ability to handle world problems, and worried that US behavior might inadvertently cause a war.”¹⁰⁵

In a Post- Cold War era, with the counterweight of the Soviet Union removed, Italy has had to reappraise the benefits of cooperation with the United States. While relatively little was “paid” in terms of the cost of cooperation, that is, by sacrificing a policy of uniquely national interest for multilateral harmony, the removal of the Soviet threat also drastically reduced the hard security benefits “bought” by cooperation with the United States. Cooperation with the United States does many things for Italy, but after 1989, it no longer provided a necessary deterrent to a Soviet threat. With survival no longer at stake, the balance had to be reset to measure the price of cooperation against benefits to other national interests. The definition of these interests is an ongoing process that has only gained widespread attention now that simple survival is not at stake, but it has gained momentum as foreign policy crises have emerged.

F. A NEW ECHELON EMERGES

Contemporary reflections on Italy’s foreign policy process marked a new beginning at the start of the 1990s. Authors use different milestones, but all agree that the nature and policy of government in Italy changed at this time. Carlo Jean refers to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989-1991 as the beginning of the “third postwar period” in Italian politics. He uses the significance of external change to call for new directions

¹⁰⁴ Ginsbourg, 176.

¹⁰⁵ Isernia, 283.

to be explored in defining national goals.¹⁰⁶ Others look at the changes in the domestic political scene to explain how the rhetoric of the old Cold War paradigm has been replaced. Several believe that Italy was only able to enjoy the ideological “elbow room” that appeared with the end of bloc power politics when Italy began to reform its own government, a process that began with the “*Mani Pulite*” [“Clean Hands”] trials and upset the political dynasties that had controlled policy initiatives since the first post-war elections.

Although the Craxi government was, by definition, led by a Socialist, and did, as demonstrated at Sigonella, stand up for its national policies against the express will of the United States, it was nonetheless limited in the degree of ideological independence it could exert from the United States. These limitations were as much due to internal politics as to an external threat. Craxi was elected in coalition with the Christian Democrats, who, as has been shown, had tied themselves to American policy goals to maintain governmental control. The ascent of the Amato government in 1992 demonstrates a break from the monolithic “party-ocracy” that had been in control since the end of the Second World War, and is seen by some as the beginning of a “Second Republic.”¹⁰⁷ Craxi had indeed expected to win the 1992 election before being indicted as part of the *Mani Pulite* trials, and as a result the socialist-led coalition now had to choose Amato to become Prime Minister. Swept in by a protest vote, the Amato government represents a selection from a new echelon of party leaders and the public rejection of simple organizing principles for both domestic and foreign politics. Shortly after the election, Angelo Codevilla of the Hoover Institution marked the results as the clear death of the first Italian Republic, noting that “contrary to the views of eminent academics, anticommunism was the only reason why the Italian people tolerated it. As soon as they were able to junk the system safely, they set about the task with gusto.”¹⁰⁸

As a result, the politicians who determined the direction of how Italy would profit from the post-Cold War “peace dividend” have come largely from left wing political

¹⁰⁶ Most thoroughly developed in the essay “Interessi di sicurezza italiani” in Fabio Corso, ed., *Interessi Nazionali e Identità Italiana*, (Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1998), 95-113.

¹⁰⁷ Lucio Caracciolo, *Terra Incognita: Le radici geopolitiche della crisi italiana*, (Rome, Gius. Laterza and Sons, 2001), 6.

¹⁰⁸ Angelo Codevilla, “A Second Italian Republic?” in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.71, No.3 (Summer 1992), 164.

traditions, and have certainly been more independent from American political hegemony than their predecessors. Even the right wing's "brief parenthesis" of Berlusconi's first administration in 1994 was free of the automatic American dominance in foreign affairs that had existed during the Cold War. Berlusconi's support for American political aims comes from his own interpretation of how they either help or hinder his unique vision of Italian national interest, just as they have for his fellow Prime Ministers of the 1990s: Amato, Prodi, and D'Alema. Maurizio Molinari, the diplomatic correspondent for *La Stampa*, noted the significance of the shift by pointing out that "a generation of leaders and functionaries of the Marxist or Catholic model and pacifistic faith have therefore found themselves confronted with the necessity to define specific Italian national interests."¹⁰⁹

G. THE CERMIS AIR DISASTER

The D'Alema administration clearly made the strongest challenges to American influence on Italian security policy. A former member of the Refounded Communist party, his ruling coalition was the first in Italian history led completely from the left. As a result, his government was the least fettered by a historical fealty to American policy aims to date. After being blocked by the United States from organizing a mission in NATO to bring order to Albania after its collapse in 1997, D'Alema found cause to publicly question the relative benefits of Italian-American defense cooperation the following year. The Cermis air disaster in February 1998, in which a US Marine Corps EA-6B aircraft struck a ski gondola and killed twenty vacationers, brought the issue of American influence into the public eye. The pilots, who were accused of several safety errors stemming from recklessness, were acquitted. Taking great offense at the outcome, Italians again publicly questioned the relative utility of American forces on Italian soil, but with even more force than it had been after Sigonella.¹¹⁰ Italian public opinion was

¹⁰⁹ Maurizio Molinari, *L'Interesse Nazionale: Dieci storie dell'Italia nel Mondo*, (Rome, Gius. Laterza and Sons, 2000), viii.

¹¹⁰ One source of agitation was the fact that a Marine Corps Safety investigation was never held. According to instructors at the NPS Aviation Safety School, a formal investigation was halted as soon as President Clinton promised full disclosure of all facts to Italian authorities. As safety investigations are

incensed, and “several Italian political parties on the Left seized on the verdict to call for renegotiation of the status of US bases in Italy, or, in the case of the Communists, for outright removal of the bases.”¹¹¹ Prime Minister D’Alema went so far as to publicly threaten a review of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that outlined the freedoms and responsibilities of US Forces operating on Italian soil. In the end, “only a personal assurance by President Clinton, agreement to new restrictions on US training flights, and the US Marine Corps’s pursuit of the pilot on other charges, calmed the Italians down.”¹¹²

Clearly, the utility brought by being a benign host to American forces was openly debatable as never before. Unlike the era of Sigonella, by the time of the Cermis incident, Italy had proven the strategic significance of its American bases during the Bosnian conflict. With Slobodan Milosevic still in power in Yugoslavia and the prospects of Balkan peace still uncertain, Italians knew that these bases would not lose their significance in the immediate future. This sense of importance explains how some politicians could call for the removal of American bases, an action that did not occur after the apparent affronts of Sigonella. Closing American bases surely not only implied a reordering of security relationships, but ran the risk of financial impact as well. With over 16,000 troops stationed across the peninsula, Italy hosts one of the largest American military contingents garrisoned abroad. Several American brigades that had been based in Germany returned permanently to the United States after Operation Desert Storm, and the economic impact on the German economy was by then well established for comparison. Unlike Sigonella’s aftermath, with the Cold War over it appeared that many Italians were potentially willing to pay both the security and economic costs of severing this commitment to the United States and NATO.

restricted documents and exempted from the military justice system to encourage full disclosure of facts without fear of prosecution, safety administrators felt that an Executive promise of no restrictions on data distribution would violate their charter and halted all inquiry. While the School says a “plussed-up” National Transportation Safety Board investigation was conducted instead, there was a perception that the military did not follow expected procedure.

¹¹¹ Peter W. Rodman, “Drifting Apart? Trends in US-European Relations,” (Washington, DC, The Nixon Center:1999), 3. (at <http://www.nixoncenter.org/publications/monographs/drifting.pdf>, 11 March 2003)

¹¹² Ibid.

H. THE NEW STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

As the Twentieth Century drew to a close, Italian foreign policy professionals had begun to recognize their nation's shortcomings and call for solutions. Authors such as General Carlo Jean attempt to educate the public in defining security interests, or, in the case of former Defense Minister Beniamino Andreatta, suggest new organizational structures like a National Security Council to coordinate defense and foreign affairs policy.¹¹³ Several note pragmatically that "after a dependence on the Americans for the technological and logistic capacities to effectively wage war, the Europeans continue to depend on Americans for the ability to express a common foreign policy."¹¹⁴ Cooperation with the United States is often seen as limiting the advancement of post-modern security goals.¹¹⁵

Appraisals of American policy betray a different set of policy goals, and hence, missions. Continued dependence is seen as a potential restraint to adopting satisfactory policies in the future. Significantly, *La Repubblica* used its last editorial page of 2002, typically a journalistic opportunity for a "summing up" of events, to address the technology and mission gap in the Italian-American defense alliance. According to its author, Guido Rampoldi, the American commander of United Nations forces in Somalia assigned Italian troops "the most risky and dirty missions to preserve US forces,"¹¹⁶ in the early 1990s, and that the Alpini battalions assigned to Afghanistan today will also assume disproportionably risky missions because "it saves [Italians] from putting their hand on their wallet to augment military spending."¹¹⁷

American policy has increasingly been criticized as both belligerent with its allies and bellicose with its adversaries. Most current views of American foreign policy are built around neorealist writing, which leaves the impression that "the Americans are for

¹¹³ Fabio Corsico, ed. *CeMiSS Conference: Interessi Nazionali e L'Identita Italiana*, (Milan, CeMiSS-FrancoAngeli, 1998)145-148.

¹¹⁴ Alessandro Colombo and Fulvio Zannoni, "'L'Italia nella politica internazionale,'" in Franco Bruni, et al, eds. *IAI/ISPI Edizione: L'Italia e la politica internazionale* (Bologna, il Mulino, 2001), 29.

¹¹⁵ These values are examined at length by Charles Moskos and James Burk in "The Postmodern Military," in James Buerk, ed, *The Adaptive Military: Armed Forces in a Turbulent World*, (New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction Pub.:1998), 169.

¹¹⁶ Guido Rampoldi, "Gli USA, L'Italia a l'alleato "cosi cosi," in *La Repubblica*, 31 December 2002, 16.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

burden sharing, but much less for responsibility and authority sharing.”¹¹⁸ A recent work by Massimo de Leonardis, published by the Ministry of Defense’s *Centro Militare di Studi Strategici*, laments an apparent demise of the “wise restrictive criteria”¹¹⁹ on the use of force in the Powell doctrine and is sharply critical of the current Bush administration’s initial policy directives. As the Italian defense establishment continues to conduct its debate on the character of future national security strategies, American goals and methods are often held up as a negative example. Without the Cold War hard balancing of such views by pragmatic security concerns, this ideological difference will play an increasingly important role in future matters of cooperation.

¹¹⁸ Massimo di Leonardis, *Europa-Stati Uniti: Un Atlantico piu largo?*, (Milan, CeMiSS-FrancoAngeli, 2001), 58.

¹¹⁹ Di Leonardis, 58.

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V. THE FUTURE OF THE “COMFORTABLE ALLIANCE”

A. TOWARD A NEW PARADIGM

The previous two chapters have highlighted how the changes in Europe in the 1990s presented clear policy challenges for the Italian people, and also how the inclusion of the Left in Italian foreign policy decision-making has caused some traditional views of alliances to be challenged. The two pillars of Italian security policy, however, the Atlantic Alliance and European integration, stand as firmly as before. As has been detailed, bilateral Italian-American relations and security relationships in an America-dominated NATO were questioned more often than ever before by mainstream elements of the Italian government. Yet Italian security policy choices have visibly and consistently coincided with American security aims. On the surface, it appears that little has changed since the establishment of the “comfortable alliance”¹²⁰ forged between the United States and Italy at the beginning of the Cold War.

This chapter will demonstrate that neither of these trends is likely to be altered in the future. An Italian foreign and security policy that maintains the close historical partnership with the United States remains in Italy’s best interest, and Italy’s current security architecture is inclined to perpetuate it. What has changed however, is the manner in which both the current and future Italian administrations will come to the table in dealing with the United States. In the past decade, international crises have forced Italian politicians to formulate national responses. Electoral reform began a process by which ideological polarization over such issues was no longer avoided, but has in fact become necessary, because the Italian electorate itself has developed a concept of national interest that it expects to see fulfilled. The era of passive policy acceptance has accordingly passed away. Italian politicians will need defensible arguments that they are representing the true face and national interest of Italy if they wish to retain their hold on office in the future.

¹²⁰ The reference applies specifically to the DC leadership’s foreign policies as discussed in Mario Del Pero’s work *L’alleato scomodo: Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo (1948-1955)*, (Rome, Carocci, 2001).

B. THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHANGE

The Sigonella incident remains a benchmark in the Italian assertion of a unique vision of national interest, but it must be remembered that Benito Craxi was a Socialist leader of a coalition government that included many Christian Democrats. The terms of his leadership mark a point in the evolution of Italian politics. The Socialists were brought in to provide the majority needed for a coalition, but it was not just their strength at the polls that earned them the acceptance of the DC. Unlike the time in 1953, when De Gasperi had offered a “historic compromise,” suggesting a Christian Democrat-Socialist electoral alliance, the Socialists of the 1980s chose to split with their traditional partners on the left, the Communists. Ideologically this had not been so difficult, as in the foreign policy debate the anti-Western rhetoric of the Communists had been replaced by the desire for measured cooperation under Berlinguer’s leadership. Both the center-left and the far left had come to accept that NATO, and in particular American, security guarantees were no longer points of contention.

Yet this proves only that participation in the Atlantic Alliance was more palatable to a broad spectrum of Italian opinion and not that it made more sense. The Italian vision of “Eurocommunism” put the left outside of the Soviet foreign policy orbit, but it did not provide the PCI a competing model of foreign policy alternatives to issue a challenge to the DC. In fact the opposite occurred. The politics of *trasformismo* began to transform, and homogenize, the foreign policy positions of the various parties towards a strong Atlantic link. Under the political dynasty of the Christian Democrats, it is not surprising that other parties shifted their position on issues in accordance with the DC’s platform. By doing so, they increased their value to, and participation with, the DC leadership and were able to make individual gains in the *partitocrazia*, the “partyocracy” that described the DC’s hegemonic control of the apparatus of government.

The fact that Italy was among the first nations to ratify the NATO decision on the Euromissiles shows just how party domination brought policy domination in favor of US

foreign policy aims.¹²¹ To be included in the political group that determined what the unitary foreign policy face of Italy would look like meant, for several decades, that you supported the face presented by the DC leadership. As expected, domestic politics drove foreign politics. Under the *partitocrazia*, however, “the Italian political establishment’s attention [was] shifted away from the substance of the international problems to be resolved and more toward domestic political issues, reinforcing that image of superficiality and precariousness which ...cost Italy so much in terms of its credibility abroad.”¹²²

Two significant changes have occurred in this situation since the end of the Cold War. First, the crises in the Balkan states and the increased burdens placed on the Italian political system by European integration have made foreign policy issues important. International questions acquired the power to shape national politics; the self-imposed “Euro tax” levied by Prime Minister Prodi to ensure Italy met the EU financial targets for first-round inclusion in the Euro zone being but one example. Both public spending priorities and commitment of troops abroad affected the Italian voting public and actively involved them in foreign policy decisions. Foreign policy debates no longer dealt with what Italians would accept, but instead discussed what Italians would do. Second, the electoral reform that dissolved the Christian Democratic party ended the centrifugal force that had brought the foreign policy platforms of the other political parties toward a single position. The establishment of open competition among parties actually encourages party leaders to offer distinct views of Italy’s role in the world as a means of differentiating themselves from one another. The Refounded Communists’ “restriction” on the employment of troops in Kosovo was done just for this purpose. Outright statements of loyalty to American positions, in particular, can often engender fair criticism that the speaker is subject to the single-minded acceptance of old paradigms if they are not qualified by rational calculations based on current interests.

¹²¹ The decision to accept American Cruise and Pershing missiles to counter the Soviet deployment of SS20 missiles was made in December 1979 by Prime Minister Francesco Cossiga, a former Minister of Defense and a Christian Democrat. The episode, is recounted as a phase of “national solidarity” for Italy to “repair its negative image” in “La battaglia dei missili,” in Sergio Romano’s *Guida alla politica estera italiana: Da Badoglio a Berlusconi*, (Milan, Rizzoli, 2002) 205-209.

¹²² Bonvicini, 71.

This change is an extremely subtle one, for “although at the beginning of the 1990s the positions of the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* and of the *Rifondazione* on foreign policy issues continued to be in part divergent from those of the ruling political forces, between 1996 and 2001 [the period of PDS and RC leadership,] Italy’s foreign policy priorities remained unchanged.”¹²³ The most straightforward conclusion from this situation is that priorities didn’t change because they didn’t have to, that Italy has supported American primacy in its security regime because doing so worked for the benefit of Italy. As the previous chapters have shown however, Italy has tried to strengthen its position with the United States and within NATO, but met with limited success each time. These stifled attempts at reforming Italy’s security partnership therefore mark Italy’s foreign policy in the 1990s as only a qualified success.

C. SOURCES OF CONTINUITY

The fact that a strong interconnection between Italian policy and American aims can be considered a success at all implies that both countries continue to share common interests. This is certainly true on several levels. American and Italian international interests converge strongly in the Mediterranean, as they do with respect to NATO and EU expansion, and more recently in conducting the Global War on Terrorism.

As previously discussed, Italy has had a hard time convincing its European neighbors of the strategic importance of the Mediterranean region. A strong advocate of both NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue and the EU’s Barcelona Process, two programs that encourage regional stability through the maintenance of contact forums and “soft power” initiatives, Italy’s leadership has unfortunately done little to convince more northern European states that the area is a pressing challenge to European security.¹²⁴

¹²³ Luca Ratti, “Continuity and Consensus in Italian Foreign Policy,” preliminary draft of a conference paper at University of Cardiff, Wales, accessed 5 June 2003 at www.psa.ac.uk/cps/2002/ratti.pdf, 3.

¹²⁴ An excellent review detailing Italian participation, and the sporadic progress of each of these security programs is presented in Steven F. Larrabee, et al, *NATO’s Mediterranean Initiative: Policy Issues and Dilemmas*, (Santa Monica, CA, RAND, 1998). Recent Italian views are expressed by Deputy Speaker of the Senate, Lamberto Dini, in his “Speech to Italian Parliament”, 30 September 2002 (At <http://www.nato.int/docu/conf/2002/c020930/c020930a.htm>, 08/02/2003), and that of IAI’s Roberto

The increased attention to relations with Arab states after the events of 11 September 2001 has apparently been insufficient to empower Italy's advocacy for these programs. This, however, is not a subject where American policy needs convincing. As a global power, the United States is not only interested in the Mediterranean, but in the regions "behind" it as well: North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Nevertheless, Italy's attempt to address regional concerns in the Mediterranean closely matches the American perspective.

Italy's longstanding advocacy for the nations of southeastern Europe has also been in line with US policies. Its support for Romania and Bulgaria's admission into the organizations of Western Europe were finally realized at the NATO Prague Summit in 2002 and the EU Athens Summit in 2003. As has the United States, Italy has long advocated the inclusion of former communist states into these security and economic regimes as a method to achieve greater stabilization in Europe as a whole.

Most recently, Italy has made significant contributions to the Global War on Terrorism. Among the first international leaders to express condolences to President Bush after the hijacking attacks of September 11th, 2001, Prime Minister Berlusconi has fulfilled his promises to assist in the dismantling of terrorist organizations. Investigations and enforcement have closed suspected al-Qaeda network cells in Milan and other cities, and Italian cooperation has been considered exemplary by many American authorities. What are most similar, however, are the motives, and not the means, of cooperation. Italy clearly remembers the social disruption caused by their own, homegrown, terrorist organizations and the costs incurred disrupting them. Resource dependent and heavily involved in international commerce, Italy, like the United States, is highly vulnerable to sudden disruption in travel and trade. Antiterrorism efforts are a necessary expense, therefore, to preserve the current quality of life.

Aliboni, "Strengthening NATO-Mediterranean Relations: A Transition to Partnership," 30 September 2002 (At <http://www.nato.int/docu/conf/2002/c020930/c020930a.htm>, 8/02/2003).

D. THE HIDDEN PATTERNS IN DEPENDENCY

In the current environment, where Italy currently enjoys the security to “shop around” for partners to meet its limited needs, the question must be asked: why America? As noted previously, Guido Rampoldi wrote recently that “it saves [Italians] from putting their hand on their wallet to augment military spending.”¹²⁵ For all of the current debate about the “capabilities gap” between the United States and its European partners, even a cursory view of Twentieth Century history will attest that European nations have little trouble ramping up military production when they determine a need to rearm. In a country expected to see deflation in the coming year because its economy is failing to meet its production potential¹²⁶, the Italian Republic has ample capital to commit to defense if it chooses to do so. The reason Italian Defense Ministers will seek to connect policy and strategy with the United States is because they have built themselves into a dependant relationship they cannot easily back out of.

The gap in research and development between Italy and the other major powers in the NATO Alliance is almost as great as the gap between the United States and Europe. Unlike many of its peers that enjoy a strong link between their Ministries of Defense and the arms production industries, Joseph Rallo pointed out in 1994 that “Italian defense firms continue to suffer from an inadequacy of R&D funds.”¹²⁷ By 1997, military R&D expenditures were five times less than Germany, nine times less than the UK, and twelve times less than France.¹²⁸ This longstanding imbalance has created a dependency on foreign research and incorporation of foreign technology. In issues where American R&D programs have cornered the market, such as long-range strategic lift, nuclear deterrents, or missile defense, Italy will be a customer by default. Yet even in areas where a European approach was adopted, Italy may continue to rely on American companies in the future. A recent decision by the German government to opt out of a German-Italian venture for 24 Maritime Patrol Aircraft is a case in point. Although the

¹²⁵ Rampoldi, La Repubblica, 31 December 2002.

¹²⁶ The Economist, “Deflation: Hear That Hissing Sound?” 17 May 2003, 61.

¹²⁷ Joseph C. Rallo, “Italy,” in Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti, eds., *The Defense Policies of Nations: A Comparative Study*, third edition (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 317.

¹²⁸ Political Economy of NATO, 133

partnership will not be renewed in June 2003, the Italian commitment to upgrade capabilities has not disappeared, and as a consequence “Rome will join the U.S. Multi-Mission Aircraft project.”¹²⁹ It can only be assumed that the consistently low funding of R&D efforts over the span of several governments was a matter of national choice, and a firmly consistent one at that.

All the post-Cold War Italian governments have accepted this technological dependency for defense spending, despite the fact that they were required to deploy Italian forces abroad more frequently than ever before. Despite the crises in Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo, Italian defense spending has remained low. Defense spending per capita in 2000 placed it tenth in a field of eighteen NATO allies.¹³⁰ Italian governments have in fact been consistent, and defense spending figures have remained almost flat all the way back to 1985.¹³¹ At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs boasts that it funds United Nations peacekeeping efforts at 120% of Italy’s expected contribution. The continued ratification of these priorities in annual budgets should send a strong message to Italy’s allies about how it views security. Despite an increased deployment of military forces, and continued diplomatic efforts to get both NATO and the EU to place higher priority on Mediterranean security issues, Italy has not funded its Ministry of Defense as though they view a strong military as necessary for their security objectives. Strong support of the United Nations, however, implies that they prefer multilateral efforts concentrating on “soft power” solutions for hard security questions. The Italian government has been moving in the opposite direction of current American patterns of defense spending and reliance on armed forces for security since long before the end of the Cold War and the ascent of the left to leadership.

¹²⁹ Martin Aguera, “Germany, Italy May Kill MPA,” in *DefenseNews*, 12 May 2003, 4.

¹³⁰ NATO, “Defence Spending,” in *NATO Review*, Spring 2001, 34.

¹³¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy - Statistical Office, Fig 2-2 “Budgets of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior, and Treasury (1985-2002 – base index 1985=100 – deflated series in constant Italian liras 1985)” in *Statistical Yearbook –2002*, p21, accessed 10 May 2003 at <http://www.esteri.it/eng/archives/statistics> .

E. THE CHARACTER OF FUTURE COOPERATION

In the last decade, since afforded the opportunity of national leadership in 1992, the political left has had to defend its ideals while simultaneously pragmatically representing Italian security interests. The left has moved to the center, and as a consequence, the center has moved left. The political environment of the 1990s made many Italians reflect on what their values and principles were. The values of Eurocommunism and Catholic traditions have lost none of their potency, and Italians feel increasingly able to voice their opinion, even when it differs with that of the United States.

The implication is that future Italian cooperation on American policy objectives must not be viewed as “money in the bank.” Whereas the pervasive neglect of the Italian point of view by American political leaders, as previously described by John Holmes, only merited a benign Italian response after Sigonella, such passivity should not be expected in the future. A recent Pew poll shows that Italian popular political opinion is indeed closer to that of Italy’s neighbors in France and Germany than to that in the United States, and would indicate that the development of an ideological rift on a foreign policy issue is strongly possible.¹³² A post-September 11th opinion project by the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Worldviews 2002*, points to even further divergence between Italy and the United States. Their research places Italy as second only to France in supporting the proposition that the “EU should become a superpower like the US” and in holding the strongest opinions in the survey for pursuing nonviolent means to combat terrorism and to reduce current levels of defense spending.¹³³ It must be remembered that one of the first, and largest, anti-war protests against the Bush administration began in Florence when fifty

¹³² Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Americans and Europeans Differ Widely on Foreign Policy Issues” April 17, 2002 at <http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?ReportID=153>, and “What the World Thinks in 2002” December 4, 2002 at <http://people-press.org/reports/print.php3?ReportID=165>.

¹³³ Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, “Worldviews 2002,” accessed 2 May 2003 at www.worldviews.org. This study, conducted in June 2002, compiled results for six European nations and the United States. While there is not a specific Italian-American comparison made, country specific data for the same questions facilitates direct comparison. A clear breakdown of individual key findings is presented in the report synopsis “Europeans See the World as Americans Do, But Critical of U.S. Foreign Policy.”

thousand “No-Global” demonstrators changed their causes from protesting globalization, advocating human rights, and increasing environmental protection to adopt a unified stand against the Bush administration’s policy on Iraq on the second day of their demonstration.¹³⁴

In the recent political, and finally military, campaign to remove Saddam Hussein from Iraq, Prime Minister Berlusconi offered full support for the Bush administration’s attempts to maintain a credible threat of force against Iraq. Yet he encountered significant resistance within the government when he tried to make these commitments resemble actual contributions. When he attempted to dispatch troops to Afghanistan in December 2002 to support American operations there, he was decried in Parliament for “backfilling” American positions to free US forces up for a Gulf conflict, and permission was at first refused. This has since been reversed, and Italian forces have assumed command of some ground operations from the United States. Yet the prime minister was never able to obtain the political support to dispatch troops to the Gulf region, and in fact became embroiled in a front-page media battle with the Italian President, Carlo Ciampi, over the issue. Ciampi publicly invoked Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic, which “repudiates war as an instrument of offence against the liberty of other peoples and as a means for the settling international disputes,”¹³⁵ and promised that not one Italian soldier would step into Iraq weeks before the ground conflict commenced.

Significantly, Prime Minister Berlusconi was either not offered, or declined, an invitation to participate in war planning in the Azores alongside his “United We Stand” co-signatories Prime Minister Blair of Great Britain and President Asnar of Spain. Since a major US and British policy aim at the time appeared to be to obtain as much international agreement on coalition strategy as possible, it is reasonable to assume that the Italian government was invited to participate. A possible reason for Berlusconi’s non-participation then, may have been in the upcoming Italian Presidency of the European Union. Berlusconi’s term in the six month revolving position runs from June through December of 2003, and culminates in the planned presentation of the new

¹³⁴ Mario Portanova, “L’Oriana e l’oceano pacifico,” in *Diario* (www.diario.it), 15 November 2002, 12-20.

¹³⁵ Constitution of the Republic of Italy, 1 May 2003 at http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/it00000_.html

European Constitution for signature at the final summit of his term.¹³⁶ Berlusconi may have abstained from the very public meeting in the Azores to prevent an appearance of partiality in a diplomatic row that had visibly divided Europe. The Greek President holding the EU spot at the time followed the same course, and therefore provides an example of how the office is viewed by Italy's European partners. If this logic is accurate, it would mark the Azores as an occasion like Sigonella, where a uniquely Italian policy choice was made at the cost of potentially garnering ill will with the United States. If this is a flawed analysis, however, the refusal of an assumed invitation shows that American policy did not exhibit enough appeal for Berlusconi to take either a domestic or European political risk. Even this qualified conclusion would, however, demonstrate a diminished importance attached to American opinion than was normally seen in the past.

The victory of the *Casa delle Libertà* in 2001 has completed the reforms begun with the establishment of the "Second Republic." Berlusconi's administration will certainly have an impact on Italian opinion in the future. His inspiration for much-needed campaigns for increased efficiency in government and his affinity for politics "American-style" will crystallize party platforms on both sides of the aisle and further increase the value of public opinion in governance. As no reasonable political challengers appear from the right, and he is the uncontested master of his own *Forza Italia!* ("Go Italy!") Party, a successful future campaign against Berlusconi will mount from the left. Barring scandal or criminal prosecution, Berlusconi will not be voted out without the left offering a competing vision of national identity.

After nearly a decade of almost unbroken center-left rule, initially brought in as a protest vote against the hegemony of the Christian Democrats, Berlusconi has been able to polarize enough support on the right to return it to national leadership. In doing so, he has adopted the style of *trasformismo* and found coalition partners in a manner consistent with much of Italian political history. Berlusconi's tempestuous partnership with the

¹³⁶ The next scheduled summit will occur six months later in June 2004, one month after the May 1st entry of the new member candidates into the Union. As the Constitutional Convention has not included these applicant members in the development process, but has required their signature on the finished product as a condition for entry, there is a high expectation for the Convention to produce an approvable product prior to their entry. Barring the possible necessity of a special summit in early 2004, Berlusconi would be right to expect the document to be presented during his term in 2003.

Lega Nord leader Umberto Bossi, which ended his first administration in 1994 after only eight months, alienates some domestic voters. Similarly, his alliance with the post-fascist *Allianza Nazionale*, raised speculation of his government's values by Italy's European neighbors and earned further criticism of his coalition. Yet in drawing these previously extremist parties to the center, he obtained sufficient votes to regain power.

However, the force behind *Forza Italia!* has potentially broken the legacy of *trasformismo*. Since Berlusconi has allied himself with the extreme right, he is unlikely to co-opt any members of the PDS or RC into his coalition. For the left to regain the national leadership they enjoyed in the 1990s they must now polarize interest with a candidate on their side of the isle. This is precisely what Rutelli attempted with the *L'Ulivo* center-left coalition when he challenged Berlusconi for national leadership in 2001. As Osvaldo Croci noted after the election in *The International Spectator*, "in a normal country, where two parties or coalitions face each other, the job of the opposition is to criticize, often noisily, the actions of the government. This is exactly what the *Ulivo* is doing."¹³⁷ Whether successful or not, it is a pattern that will prove necessary at the polls in the future. In this manner, the amorphous miasma of an undefined center may be gone forever, and policy debates may more closely resemble that of states with a two party system.

As the events of the past decade show, coalition parties offering competing visions of foreign policy will likely increasingly weigh heavier on ideological concerns, rather than on pragmatic security estimates. As the Italian security architecture is immediately committed to the decisions of the recent past, differences in tone and ideology will be the primary means politicians will define and differentiate themselves in a narrow scope of possible policy options. While it does not guarantee that future foreign policy aims will diverge from American interests, the trend certainly shows that Italians will feel less restraint in voicing their disagreements when they arise.

¹³⁷ Osvaldo Croci, "The Second Berlusconi Government and Italian Foreign Policy," in *The International Spectator*, 2/2002, 101.

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VI. CONCLUSION

Italy's foreign policy has remained strongly committed to the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community. Since the end of World War II, its policy development process has been limited by the nature of coalition politics. A public foreign policy debate was largely avoided because the resulting polarization threatened to break up already fragile coalitions. As a result, Italy has historically received the security guarantees and economic opportunities of other Western European states without attempting to initiate new policy.

This situation changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the reorganization of Italian national elections in 1992. This external and internal political reorganization gave Italian leaders the ideological freedom to challenge decades of status quo assumptions. Politically, it allowed the Left to assume national leadership for most of the 1990s.

At the same time, events forced the Italian public to consider their security interests afresh. Instability in Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo brought problems to the doorstep. Italy's long history as a security consumer, however, put it at a disadvantage within NATO when it attempted to offer solutions to these crises. This marginalization also carried over into other policy positions. Italy's recommendations for the first round of expansion among the former communist states, areas with strong commercial and political ties to Italy, largely failed. Similarly, Italy's attempts to highlight the international importance of the Mediterranean have met resistance, despite the fact that many of the crises of the 1990s occurred there.

As a result of these events, the Italian public began to develop a concrete idea of national foreign policy interest. What has emerged is a "postmodern" vision for international security. Italy has distilled the commonality between the communist and Catholic traditions into a popular approval for "soft power" initiatives that build security through economic development and trade, renounce aggressive applications of military power, but support multilateral peacekeeping efforts to maintain law and order. To this extent Italy's development has broadly conformed to that of Europe as a whole. At the

same time, the end of the Cold War has heightened public scrutiny of national security policy, which has helped to keep it within the boundaries of this postmodern vision. The increased importance of foreign policy issues to the electorate has the potential to alter Italy's traditionally close conformity to American security policy. Post-September 11th surveys of Italian voters show that they have perceptions more in common with the French than the United States. The current Berlusconi government clearly values the special Italian- American security partnership. Based on this support and the long history of policy affinity, the United States should expect Italian support for its initiatives, with the qualification that American requests must now be palatable to the politically concerned Italian electorate. The obvious examples of this phenomenon are Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The Italian government allowed unhindered deployment of the 16,000 American forces based in Italy for these operations and was among the first to issue public statements supporting American policy aims. No Italian forces have participated, however, until the "fighting" was over and the peace keeping phases of the operations began. As soon as the missions could be de-linked from charges of American unilateralism or imperialism, the Berlusconi government was able to devote substantial manpower and treasure to support US policy. The United States should continue to expect this pattern of support, including public caveats against perceived US aggression or unilateralism, regardless of the government in power.

The Berlusconi government's policies will not differ drastically from the pro-American affinity that was historically exhibited by the Christian Democratic Party for 45 years. The electoral reform that ushered in the Socialists and began what many consider the birth of the "Second Republic" was only the first phase of transformation in the Italian government. Since the 1992 elections, the Italian people have had their security interests tested in a manner that has forced them to determine the limits of acceptable national policy. Prime Minister Berlusconi's House of Freedoms Party won election by polarizing public opinion so that coalition politics began to resemble the two party system in place in the United States and Britain. Barring a collapse from within, Berlusconi's opponents will have to overcome internal division and form a unified front to regain the position they held for the decade of the 1990s. In such a contest, both the

right and left will have to formulate viable alternatives for an Italian public that now deeply cares about foreign policy, and will question any endeavor based on a distinct concept of national interest.

American policy makers should heed this emerging internal necessity in Italy and acknowledge that our longstanding security partner will require a convincing argument to support policy in the future.

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